PORTSMOUTH NOVELISTS

David Francis

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About this Portsmouth Paper

A remarkably high number of successful novelists were born in Portsmouth, or lived or worked here for a time. Charles Dickens probably comes to mind instantly, and then possibly Arthur Conan Doyle and perhaps H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling and Nevil Shute. It may be a surprise to find that there are another two dozen or so who fall into one or more of these three categories, several still living here, who have achieved distinction as authors of novels. This paper considers their background and where appropriate looks at their use of Portsmouth as a setting in their works. It also ponders whether there is anything about the nature of the town/city to explain why so many people associated with it have taken up authorship as a career, and reflects that whereas in the past many of our authors were only too anxious to get away from the place, a good number of our contemporary authors choose to live in or near it. It concludes with a list of other novels set in Portsmouth where the author's connection, if any, has yet to be established.

Front cover:
Olivia Manning, a watercolour by William Grant.
(PMRS 355/1982)

Back cover:
The cover of Westerman's A lad of grit.
(Courtesy of The Portsmouth Grammar School Library & Archive, Thacker Collection)

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Portsmouth Novelists

David Francis

This paper considers a remarkable Portmuthian phenomenon, namely the high number of successful novelists who were born or who have at some time resided here. Thirty find their way into the following pages, a figure with which probably only the largest cities can compare. Several of them are household names, and several more will be well known to enthusiastic patrons of public libraries, especially our local ones. They include America's first best-selling novelist, the creator of the most famous detective in fiction, a founder member of the Society of Authors and the (different) authors of the best-selling novels in 1917 and 1922. Is there anything about their background or about the place itself that can explain this high number (and further research into some of the names mentioned in the end notes and appendix might well increase the total), or is it just a statistical accident?

On the face of it, Portsmouth seems an unlikely location as a home for or stimulus to literary endeavours. Someone once remarked that much of Portsmouth resembles a northern industrial town dropped on to the south coast. Even the genteel suburb of Southsea is perhaps less genteel than other watering places east and west. With a goodly proportion of the population throughout Portsmouth's history being transient naval or military personnel, one might suppose that there was less scope for the establishment of a settled, cultivated elite here than elsewhere, at least until the rapid development of the polytechnic and subsequent university in the last third of the 20th century.

But the town had never been a total cultural wasteland. Theatrical entertainments are known to have been available in the late 17th century, and there were various enterprises in the next century that culminated in there being two theatres in High Street by 1761.

Formal educational provision began in the 18th century. As early as 1717 the Leet Jurors were lamenting the lack of a grammar school in the town and Portsmouth Grammar School (the *alma mater* of several of our subjects) eventually opened in the early 1750s. The Beneficial Society's School opened in Portsea in 1754. In 1812 a Lancastrian School was opened in White Swan Fields, somewhere to the east of the present Guildhall Walk, and within two years Bell schools were opened in Green Row and at a site now lost under the Market Way/Hope Street road development. Private schools began to appear about this time.[1] Of these, St Paul's School, 1825-50, provided some education for two of our subjects. The town council were swift to adopt the 1870 Elementary Education Act and the first School Board for Portsmouth was elected in January 1871. In the 32 years of its existence, it built 26 elementary schools and one higher grade school. Meanwhile the Portsmouth and Portsea Literary and Philosophical Society was established in 1818, a Mechanics' Institute was founded in Portsea in 1825 and another in Landport, known as the Watt Institute, in 1848. True, they had ceased operation by 1860, but a new Portsea Island Society for the Culture of Science and Literature was formed in 1869.[2] It had changed its name to the more manageable Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society by the time Dr Arthur Conan Doyle was elected a member in November 1883, and it continued in some form or another until 1955. More recently, a magazine entitled the *Portsmouth Reader*, emanating from the public library, ran from 1937-1957, and a Portsdown Writers' Circle operated from 1969 until 1985.

Moreover, it may be that because there was a relatively high level of transient officers and the like, there was a slightly greater chance of someone who was to achieve fame being born or schooled here than in a community with a more settled population. Whatever the true reasons – and Arthur Conan Doyle himself published an article demonstrating, not very scientifically, that Hampshire was the most intellectual part of England – Portsmouth is probably at least as rich in its literary associations as any town or city of comparable size.[3]

Our gallery is confined to authors of fiction, although one of them is better known for a series of non-fiction works that still bear his name after nearly a century. It remains a future task for someone to write about those who have distinguished themselves in a wide variety of other fields of scholarly endeavour. Meanwhile, let's consider our novelists in roughly chronological order according to when they were *in* Portsmouth.

The story begins in 1762 when a daughter, Susanna, was born to Lieutenant William Haswell, RN. At that time Portsmouth was simply what we now know as Old Portsmouth, still surrounded by its extensive fortifications, with Portsea, the area around Queen Street, growing but not yet having fortifications of its own. It is under her married name, Susanna Rowson, that the young lady deserves our attention. It is probably a name that does not spring instantly to mind, but she was to become America's first best-selling novelist.

Susanna Haswell Rowson, 1762-1824, died in Boston, Massachusetts, on 2 March 1824, but her date of birth and precisely where she was born are not certain. According to Patricia Parker, her mother had become ill a few months after her marriage in March 1761, and died ten days after Susanna's birth. She was buried on 15 February 1762, and Susanna's baptism in St Thomas's is recorded on 25 February 1762. Parker further suggests that the family home was in Penny Street.[4]

Baby Susanna seems to have been left in England when her father went to Massachusetts later in 1762 or 1763 as a collector of the royal customs. He found himself a new wife, Rachel, and they settled in a town called Hull, overlooking Nantasket harbour, where Susanna was brought to live in 1766. Her father was a well-educated man, and Susanna was exposed to great literature at an early age.[5] The War of Independence, however, shattered their pleasant existence, and as a representative of the British government Haswell was for a time a virtual prisoner. He eventually returned to England in 1778, and Susanna set about earning a living as a governess.

Not much is known about this period of her life, but she evidently progressed well in literary circles, and published a novel, *Victoria*, in 1786, the same year as she married William Rowson, a hardware merchant and trumpeter in the horse guards. In 1791 another novel appeared, *Charlotte, a tale of*

Susanna Rowson, a watercolour by an unknown artist.
(Courtesy of Susanna Rowson Collection (#7379), Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library)

Charles Dickens aged 29, drawn by A. D'Orsay in December 1841.
(Portsmouth City Library, Local Studies Section, LP 921 Dic)

truth (London: for William Lane at the Minerva Press). Only one copy of this edition is known, in the University of Virginia Library, which may be a testimony to its at best limited success. Meanwhile, her husband went bankrupt and they took up careers in acting to supplement Susanna's income from her writing. In 1793, they emigrated to America, and eventually settled in Boston. *Charlotte* ... was re-issued in Philadelphia the following year and became a rip-roaring best seller. Ellen Brandt says of *Charlotte* ...:

> Avidly read and commented upon by readers and critics from the 18th century to the present, re-issued in accurate and not-so-accurate editions by a plethora of well-known publishers in almost every major American city and several foreign countries, *Charlotte* was, by every acceptable gauge, America's first "best-selling" book in novel form, the forerunner of a popular or mass fiction which includes such successes as *Uncle Tom's cabin*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Gone with the wind.*[6]

Here's the beginning of *Charlotte* ...:

"Are you for a walk," said Montraville to his companion, as they arose from table; "are you for a walk? or shall we order the chaise and proceed to Portsmouth?" Belcour preferred the former; and they sauntered out to view the town, and to make remarks on the inhabitants, as they returned from church. Montraville was a Lieutenant in the army: Belcour was his brother officer: they had been to take leave of their friends previous to their departure for America, and were now returning to Portsmouth, where the troops waited orders for embarkation ... A tall, elegant girl looked at Montraville and blushed: he instantly recollected the features of Charlotte Temple, whom he had once seen and danced with at a ball at Portsmouth.

And here is the start of Chapter 15, entitled "Embarkation":

> It was with the utmost difficulty that the united efforts of Mademoiselle and Montraville could support Charlotte's spirits during their short ride from Chichester to Portsmouth, where a boat waited to take them immediately on board the ship in which they were to embark for America.

Dickens's birthplace.
(PMRS 1835M/1987)

The novel still features on the literature courses in many American universities. It's the classic tale of a woman led astray (and implicitly, a warning to young lady readers not to get led astray), possibly based on a real scandal, with most of the action in America, but it's pleasing to note that the tale begins in Chichester, and the protagonists sail across the Atlantic from Portsmouth. The book was reissued many times, sometimes with the more popular title *Charlotte Temple*, but the next English edition only appeared in 1819. Susanna Rowson published many other works in Boston, and became well-known in education circles – indeed a Portsmouth girl who made good.

The new suburb of Portsea acquired its own fortifications in the 1770s, and by the beginning of the next century housing was spreading north-eastwards into the area then known as New Town, more familiar now as Mile End. It was here, in what was then 387 Mile End Terrace, now 393 Old Commercial Road, that Portsmouth's most famous son **Charles** (John Huffham) **Dickens** was born on 7 February 1812. His father, John, was a pay clerk in the dockyard who had started his career in London but seems to have been posted to Portsmouth in 1807.[7] So Charles Dickens was born here by the chance of his father's posting. Dickens himself wrote "I was born at Portsmouth, an English seaport town principally remarkable for mud, Jews, and sailors, on the 7th of February 1812".[8]

The house of his birth was purchased by Portsmouth Corporation in 1903 and preserved as a museum furnished in the style of 1809, the time when John and Elizabeth Dickens set up the first home of their married life there. Some of the paintwork is based on paint samples taken from the walls, although the kitchen dresser is the only original furnishing.

Charles was baptised St Mary's, Portsea, on 4 March 1812. The font was moved to St Alban's church in Copnor Road when it was opened in 1914. Since 1998, a commemoration service has been held annually on or near 4 March in that church. Local members of the Dickens Fellowship participate in the service, dressed in period costume, and specially selected readings are given from the Bible and from various writings of Dickens.

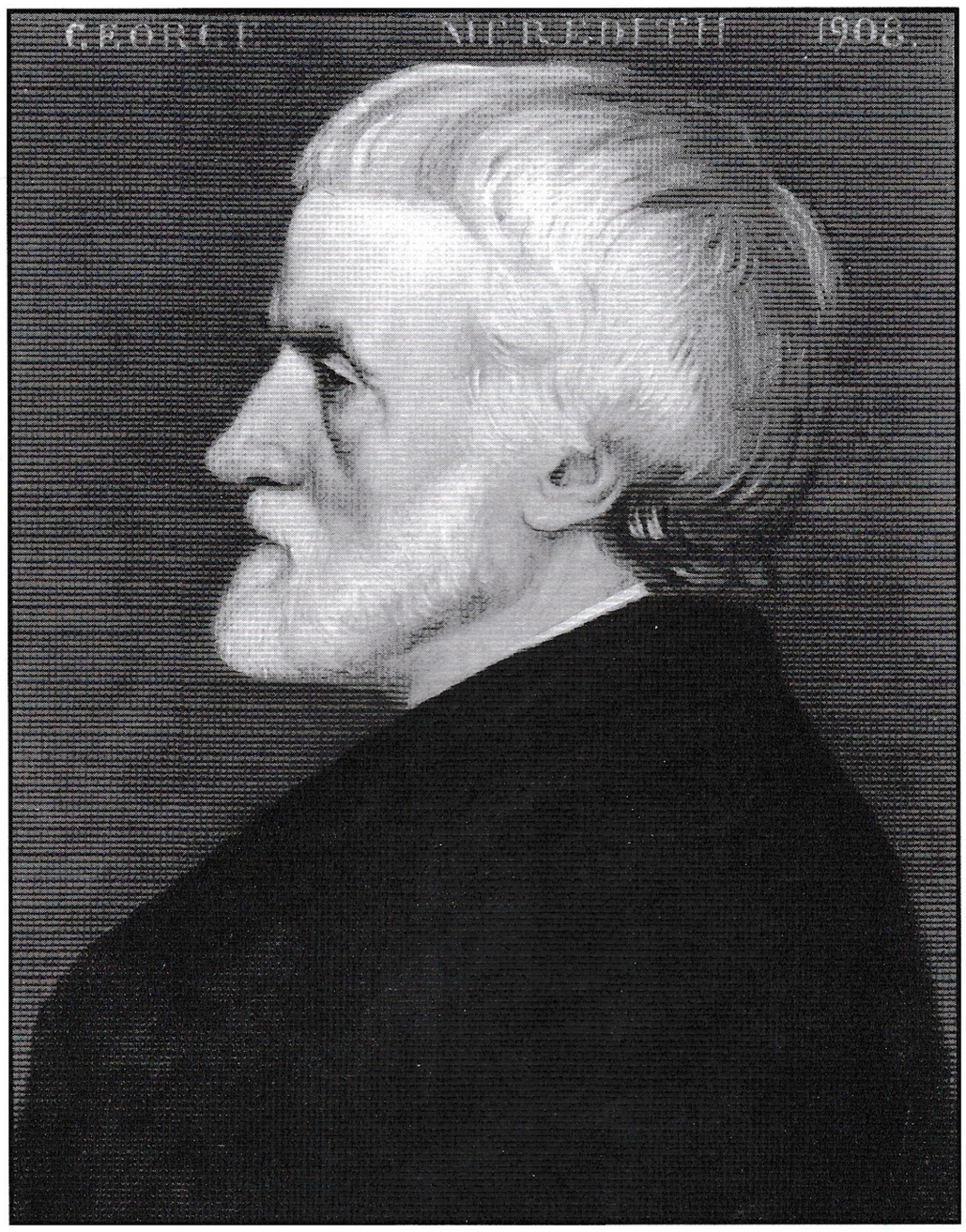
On 24 June 1812 the family left Mile End Terrace and moved to Hawk (now Hawke) Street. Allen refutes the usual argument that their move was due to penury, and argues instead that it was simply for convenience, being only just round the corner from John's place of work.[9] The address is thought to have been number 16. It had three floors and a basement. The Dickens family were lodgers, but this implied no social stigma at the time. The house, along with its neighbours, was destroyed by bombs in the 1939-45 war.

In the early years of the 19th century, Southsea had its tentative first developments in King's Terrace and the streets to the east. At Christmas 1813 the Dickens family moved to 39 Wish Street. This is now King's Road, and the house was nearly opposite the junction with what is now St Paul's Road (on the corner of which, some 70 years later, H.G. Wells served an unhappy apprenticeship in Edwin Hide's drapery – the quiet semi-rural road of the early 19th century having become a bustling shopping area). The residence was "a good house in an area altogether superior to that of Hawke Street…".[10] A brother, Alfred, was born to Charles and Fanny there, but he died aged three months, and was for some reason as yet unexplained buried in Widley churchyard (that is, in the now vanished church of St Mary, Widley, not Christ Church, Portsdown). John Dickens was transferred back to London in January 1815, and so ended the family's direct connection with Portsmouth.

When he was 12, Charles was sent to work in a blacking warehouse, but subsequently attended the Wellington House Academy until he was 15 and where reputedly his talent for writing began to manifest itself. He found work in a lawyer's office, and later as a court reporter, and then as a parliamentary reporter before his career as a novelist developed. He contributed to various periodicals and became the first editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which *Oliver Twist* first appeared, following the success of *The posthumous papers of the Pickwick Club* (first published in monthly parts by Chapman and Hall from March 1836 to November 1837). Many more novels appeared before his sudden death in 1870, and he was also involved with various other periodicals.

Sadly for our purpose, only one novel has Portsmouth in a significant role – *Nicholas Nickleby* (first published in monthly parts by Chapman and Hall from March 1838 to September 1839), and Dickens visited the town to collect detail for the book. One episode finds the hero and his companion Smike encountering Vincent Crummles, a theatrical manager, in an old inn between Butser Hill and Horndean, on their way to Portsmouth, and they are persuaded to join him. Here is how they found the theatre:

George Meredith, a portrait painted in 1908 by William Strang.
(National Portrait Gallery, London, 1908)



It was not very light, but Nicholas found himself close to the first entrance on the prompt side, among bare walls, dusty scenes, mildewed clouds, heavily daubed draperies, and dirty floors. He looked about him; ceiling, pit, boxes, gallery, orchestra, fittings, and decorations of every kind, – all looked coarse, cold, gloomy, and wretched.

And here is an observation on the availability of digs with which cohorts of students past and present of what is now the University of Portsmouth may or may not agree: "There is no lack of comfortable furnished apartments in Portsmouth, and no difficulty in finding some that are proportionate to very slender finances". In *A history of Portsmouth theatres* there is a short discussion on the possible identity of some of the actors Nicholas and Smike worked with, the theatre itself being on a site now covered by Portsmouth Grammar School.[11]

Portsmouth subsequently played little part in Dickens's life, although it is known that he gave public readings in November 1858 and May 1866 in St George's Hall (in St George's Square, where the block of flats named Mill Gate House now stands). George Dolby, the manager of Dickens's tours at the time, recounts the following: "On the morning after our arrival we set out for a walk, and turning the corner of a street suddenly, found ourselves in Landport Terrace. The name of the street catching Mr. Dickens's eye, he suddenly exclaimed, 'By Jove! Here is the place where I was born'."[12] Allen suggests that Dickens was reminded of the family home in Wish Street, just around the corner, rather than his birthplace.[13]

By an amazing coincidence considering how unimportant Portsmouth was to Dickens once his family had left the town, the two most important women in his life, apart from his wife, lie buried not far from each other in Highland Road cemetery, Southsea. Maria Beadnell, a banker's daughter, was Charles Dickens's first love.[14] They met in 1830 and for Charles it was love at first sight. His mind was quickly filled with thoughts of ever-lasting romance and marriage. It is not very clear how far, if at all, his affections were reciprocated, but Maria is thought to have been the inspiration for the character Dora in *David Copperfield*: "She had the most delightful little voice, the gayest little laugh, the pleasantest and most fascinating little ways, that ever led a lost youth into hopeless slavery. She was rather diminutive altogether. So much the more precious, I thought."

Maria went on to marry one Henry Winter, a wood and timber merchant who came to Portsmouth and founded the firm whose name survived into living memory in Greetham Street, and who gave his name to Winter Road – hence her final resting place in Highland Road cemetery after her death in 1886. Many years later, she contacted Dickens again and in 1855 they agreed to a secret meeting without their spouses. Maria warned him that she was somewhat changed in appearance. In spite of this he was very surprised at the ravages time had wrought. This meeting provided the basis for Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*: "Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow."

In 1857, Dickens met Ellen Ternan, a young actress, and his relationship with her (the exact nature of which still excites debate although many sources describe her as his mistress) lasted until his death in 1870.[15] Although he took great pains to keep the relationship a secret, Ellen was still the first beneficiary in his will. She eventually moved to Southsea to join her sisters who ran a school at 17/19 Victoria Grove and then, taking 10 years off her age, married one Revd George Wharton-Robinson. She died in 1914.

While both Rowson and Dickens are examples of children born to naval or dockyard officials, our next three subjects were born within little more than a decade to established local businessmen, the first operating in Portsmouth itself, the second in what was then a fashionable part of Portsea and the third in the rapidly expanding area north-east of the older towns. Beyond that, the only coincidence is that two went, at different times, to the same school.

Many accounts of literary Portsmouth devote a good deal of space to the now largely forgotten **George Meredith,** 1828-1909.[16] This son of Augustus Meredith, an indigent tailor of local family, was born at 73 High Street (near the corner where it joins Broad Street) on 12 February 1828. (His father's indigence was caused by an indifference to money and perhaps over-generous hospitality, traits that he had inherited from *his*

George Meredith's birthplace in the High Street, Old Portsmouth.
(PMRS 540A/1/12)

father, one of the leading tailors in the town, rather than inefficiency.)

There is an Augustus Meredith listed among the members of the Portsmouth and Portsea Literary and Philosophical Society in the 1820s. Assuming this is George's father, then presumably the boy was subjected to some sort of cultural appreciation from an early age. George became a pupil at St Paul's School, Southsea, for a while, and then in early 1843 he was sent to the Moravian school at Neuwied on the Rhine near Coblenz. Although he was there for less than two years, Meredith was to refer to this period as the only real education he had. The school stimulated his intellect and taught him to respect rationality, self-respect, sincerity and courage. The time spent there also left him with a love of German music, poetry and the German countryside. It marked the end of his formal schooling.

George began his career as a solicitor in London, but soon turned to writing, at first journalism and poetry (24 of his earliest poems were contributed to *Household Words*), and then some fifteen novels. His acceptance into the circle of Thomas Love Peacock no doubt aided his literary aspirations. His works had a good following during his lifetime and for a few years afterwards, but interest fell away quite quickly and they are now largely neglected. The novelist Anthony Trollope once described his prose style as "twisted into curl-papers". Critics today regard him as unnecessarily verbose and inclined to pontificate, while allowing that he could occasionally come up with writing of the highest quality. Nevertheless, Meredith deserves some reflected honour in that in his capacity as a reader for the publishers Chapman and Hall, he 'discovered' Thomas Hardy and George Gissing, although he rejected

Sir Walter Besant.
(PMRS 350/1946)

George Bernard Shaw and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, one of the best-selling novels of the Victorian period.

Meredith's childhood in Portsmouth was not a happy one, and later in life he settled for recording his place of birth as "Hampshire", or once, on a census form, "near Petersfield". His reticence about his place of birth and his family led to wild rumours about the possibility of illicit paternity, suggestions for which included, among others, George IV, the then Duke of Clarence (later William IV) and the novelist Bulwer Lytton! The reasons for his reticence about his origins is not really known. Perhaps it was just snobbery, in not being willing to acknowledge tradesmen as his immediate forebears.

Portsmouth (thinly disguised as Lymport) features significantly in only one of his works, *Evan Harrington* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1861), ironically a satire on snobbery. His grandfather, Melchizedec Meredith, was also tailor and naval outfitter at the same premises as his father, 73 High Street. (The shop gets a mention in Captain Marryat's *Peter Simple* – "we called at Meredith's the tailor, and he promised that by the next morning we should be fitted completely".) Grandfather Meredith is portrayed in the novel as Melchisedec Harrington – "a fine figure of a man and there ain't many marquises to match him". Two of George's aunts are also depicted, Harriet as Mrs Andrew Cogglesby, and Louisa as the Countess of Saldar. There is little description of local significance, and the events could have taken place anywhere, so that the book's vestigial interest lies in its (auto)biographical snippets.

(Sir) **Walter Besant**, 1836-1901, was born at 3 St George's

Square, Portsea. He was the third son and the fifth of the eventual ten children fathered by William Besant, a Portsmouth-based wine merchant who had an excellent collection of books. His early education was at the same St Paul's School as George Meredith had attended, and he later went to King's College, London, and Christ's College, Cambridge, of which he was a scholar. From 1861 to 1867 he was senior professor of the Royal College, Mauritius, but deciding that teaching was not his true *métier,* returned to London, with a view to a literary career. He published several works on French language and literature, and then on Palestinian history/archaeology. From 1868 to 1885 he acted as secretary to the Palestine Exploration Fund. In 1884 he was a founder member of the Society of Authors, and was chairman of its management committee from 1889 until 1892. He was knighted in 1895 in recognition of his works as a novelist and his energies on behalf of the society.

He had become a novelist somewhat by accident. In 1869, James Rice published without acknowledgement an article by Besant in the magazine he edited, *Once a Week*. Besant protested. Rice apologised, asked Besant for more contributions, and also invited him to collaborate on a novel he had already plotted. The result was *Ready-money Mortiboy*, first serialised in *Once a Week* and in 1872 published in book form.[17] Several other novels followed, Rice being mainly responsible for the plot and its development and Besant for the literary form. By the tastes of today, they are romantic and florid in style, but not without humour and interesting characters, showing some influence from Charles Dickens.

The hero of their *By Celia's arbour* (London: Sampson Low and Co., 1878) is Ladislas Pulaski, son of a Polish exile from the unsuccessful rising of 1830-31. A hundred or so of these exiles lived in Portsmouth at the time, and the novel, beginning in 1853, is set in Portsea, with many atmospheric glimpses of places and persons. The contemporary journal *Man of the World* said of it: "It is a charming idyll, replete with sketches of manners and customs, characters, and quaint out-of-the-way nooks in the Portsmouth of thirty years ago".[18] A few examples follow.

From the Portsea ramparts:

> The evening gun from the Duke of York's bastion proclaimed the death of another day with a loud report, which made the branches of the trees above us to shake and tremble. And from the barracks in the town; from the Harbour Admiral's flagship; from the Port Admiral's flagship; from the flagship of the Admiral in command of the Mediterranean Fleet, then in the harbour; from the tower of the old church, there came such a firing of muskets, playing of fifes, ringing of bells, and sounding of trumpets … We … turned to look across the parapet. Beyond that was the moat, and beyond the moat was a ravelin, and beyond the ravelin the sea-wall …

The market, thought to have been in Commercial Road at that time:

> Shops were open, especially places which sold things to eat and to drink. Hundreds of men – chiefly young men – were loafing about, pipes in their mouths, among the women, who were buying in a street market, consisting almost entirely of costers' carts and barrows, and where the principal articles exposed for sale appeared to be hot cooked things of pungent and appetising odour, served and dressed with fried onions.

St George's Square:

> The captain's house, one of a row, stood separated from the street by the respectability of three feet clear and an iron railing. It was close to St Faith's Square, a fashionable and almost aristocratic quarter, inhabited by retired naval officers, a few men who had made their fortune in business, and a sprinkling of lawyers.

And the church itself:

> The building belonged to the reign of the Third George, and was, externally, a great barn of red brick, set in a courtyard, surrounded by a red brick wall, and with a roof of red tiles. Inside it was a large white-painted edifice, resting on four pillars.

The Common Hard:

> Thirty years ago [it] was a place which seemed to belong to the previous century. There were no great houses and handsome shops, but in their place, a picturesque row of irregular cottages, no two of which were exactly alike … They were two-storied houses; the upper story [*sic*] was very low, the ground-floor was below the level of the street … A wooden bench was placed along the iron railing near the beach, on which sat every day, and all day long, old sailors, in a row.

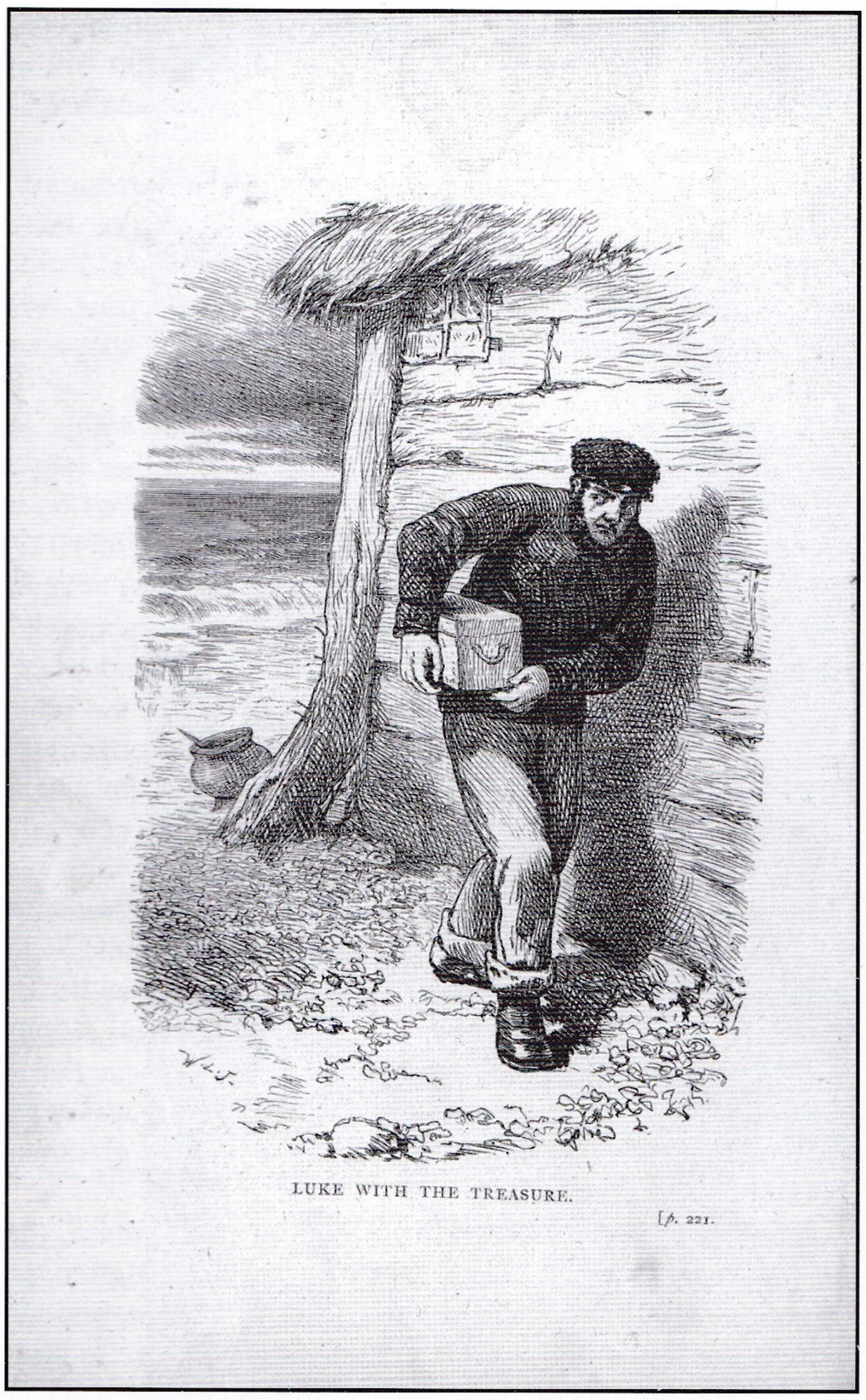
The whole passage, (too long to quote in full) from chapter six is worth reading for its insights into the behaviour of the various social classes, and observations on that now defunct species of church-goer, the pew-openers, who "once a month … had the satisfaction of finishing the sacramental wine …".

After Rice's death in 1882, several more novels followed from Besant, many dealing with social problems. *All sorts and conditions of men* (1882) was set in the East End of London and gave rise to the movement that eventually produced the People's Palace in the Mile End Road. *The children of Gibeon* (1886) was a polemic against the sweating system. His *The holy rose* (1890) is set partially around Portchester in the 1790s.

Walter Besant was one of the most widely read of novelists in the late 19th century. The first two chapters of his *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1902) have considerable descriptive detail of his childhood in Portsea as well as appropriate extracts from his works of fiction.

Sarah Doudney, 1841-1926, was born in Portsmouth and

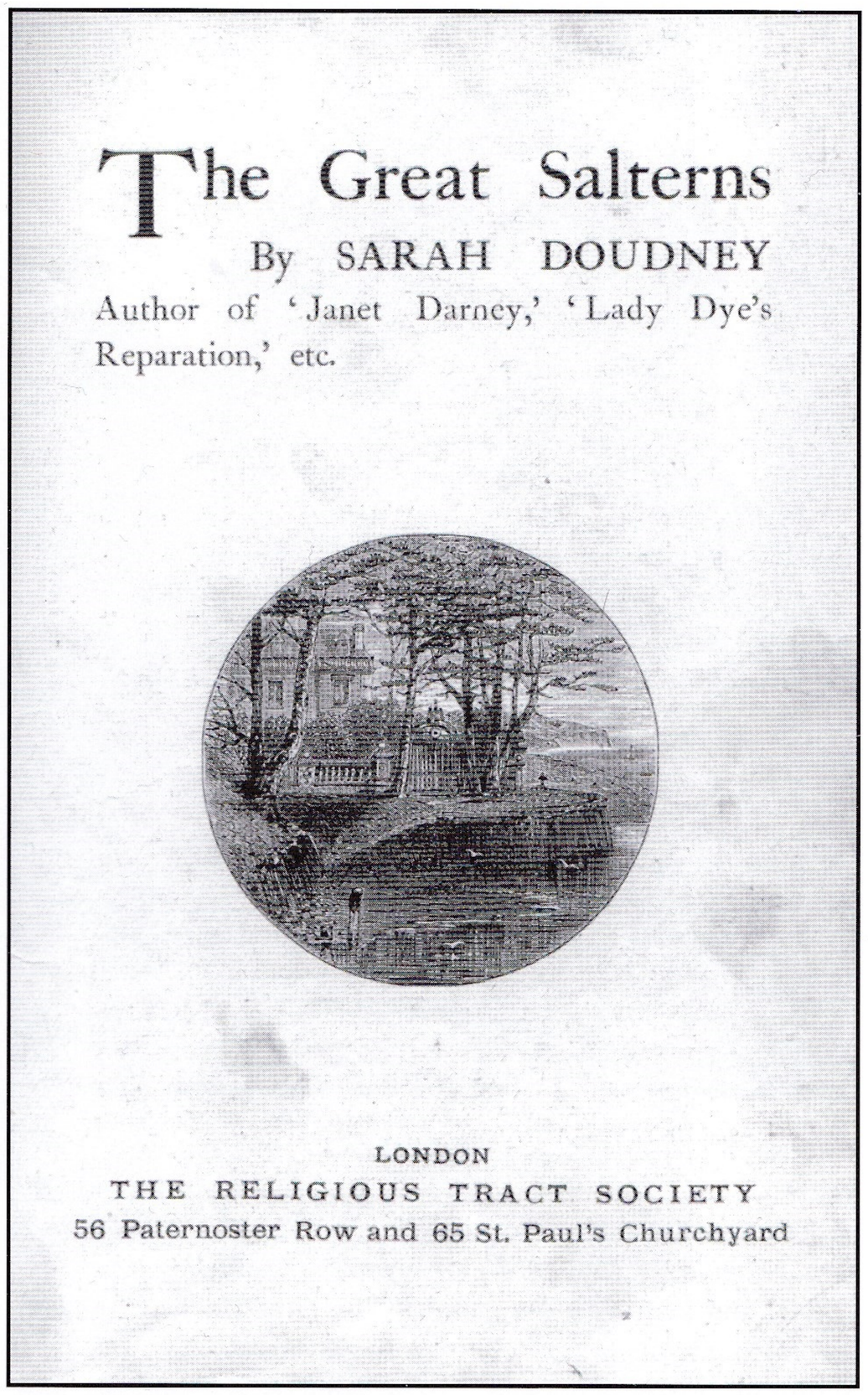
"Luke with the treasure", the villain of the story depicted in the frontispiece of Sarah Doudney's The Great Salterns.
(PMRS)



LUKE WITH THE TREASURE.

[*p.* 221.

The title page of Sarah Doudney's The Great Salterns.
(PMRS)



The Great Salterns

By SARAH DOUDNEY

Author of 'Janet Darney,' 'Lady Dye's Reparation,' etc.

LONDON

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

56 Paternoster Row and 65 St. Paul's Churchyard

baptized at St Mary's, Portsea, the youngest child of G.E. Doudney (again of local family), who with her uncle owned a candle and soap factory near The Royal Portsmouth Hospital.[19] She attended Madame Dowell's College in Southsea, and was also taught by a Mrs Kendall. Much of her childhood was spent in Lovedean, where she lived with her parents until the 1870s. She moved to London for a time, but had returned to Portsmouth by 1889. Two letters of 1889 and 1890 are dated "Springfield, Derby Road, North End", where her father still lived.[20] She eventually moved to Oxford, possibly in the 1890s, and she died there in 1926.

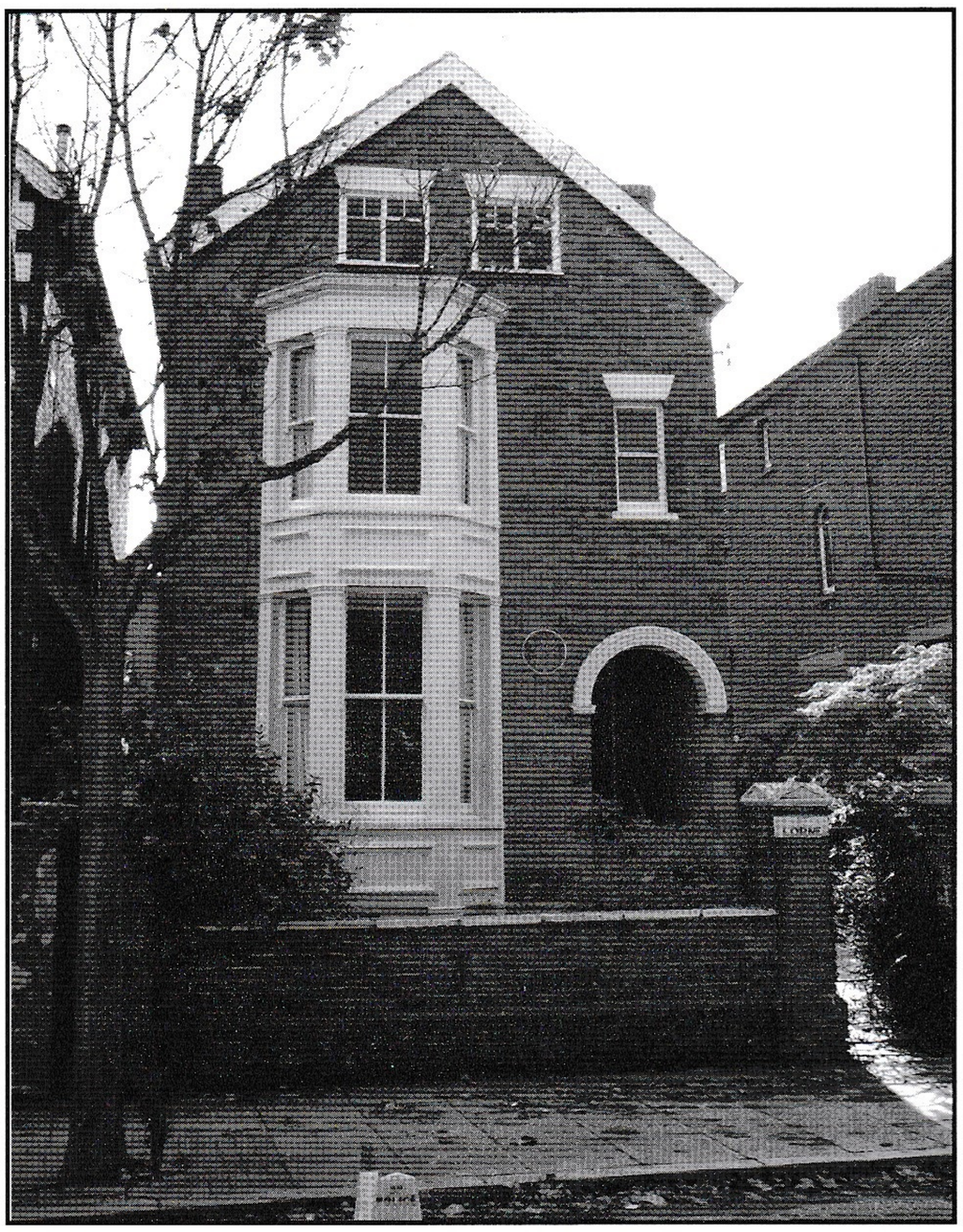
Another uncle was the evangelical Revd David Doudney, who had a son and a cousin who were also clergyman, so it is perhaps no surprise that Sarah produced a stream of hymns, religious poems and novels throughout her long life. Her novel *The Great Salterns* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1875) is set in and around a house of that name, "a square white mansion", on the east coast of Portsea Island. Here's how the scene is set:

> … a fresh breeze was blowing off the sea …. The tide was high … and the spring sunshine rested peacefully on the slopes of Portsdown Hill, showing the great white chasms of the chalk-pits. Still farther off, lay the fair heights of Sussex, faint and blue in the distance; nearer, and on the right hand, were the coasts of Havant and Hayling.

Milton (i.e. St James's) church is mentioned, but these and occasional other local details serve only as background to a heavily moralising tale in which good people die and bad people are converted. Another of Sarah Doudney's works is entitled *The Crossport story,* which sounds as if it may have some local significance.[21]

We move now to the 1870s. The largely working class areas were still expanding rapidly north-eastwards, and the more genteel suburb of Southsea eastwards. Moreover, Southsea acquired a number of small schools and boarding establishments for children whose parents were overseas, the father usually on military or naval duty.

Lorne Lodge, Kipling's lodgings in Campbell Road, Southsea.



(Joseph) **Rudyard Kipling**, 1865-1936, spent only a few years of his childhood (1871-77) in Portsmouth, but the experience was enough for it to find its way into a short story, *Baa, baa blacksheep* (1888), his first novel *The light that failed* (1890) and his autobiography.[22] His father, an exception to the military/naval model, was Professor of Architectural Sculpture at the School of Art in Bombay. He and his wife were devoted parents to their son and daughter Alice, known widely as 'Trix', and scholars continue to debate why they were boarded out to a Captain and Mrs Holloway at Lorne Lodge in Campbell Road, Southsea – still there, with a blue plaque on the wall.

Kipling hated it, and paints a gloomy picture of his life there; in his autobiography, he calls it the "House of Desolation". It smelled of "aridity and emptiness" and "stood in the extreme suburbs of Southsea, next to a Portsmouth unchanged in most particulars since Trafalgar …". In *The light that failed* (London. Ballantyne, Hanson and Co., 1891), he describes his relationship with his landlady thus: "She had made her profit of the allowances supposed to be expended on his clothes … Where he had looked for love, she gave him first aversion and then hate." *Baa, baa blacksheep*, originally published in *Wee Willie Winkie and other child stories* (Allahabad: A.H. Wheeler and Co., 1888) simply tells of a boy and girl in a foster home where unhappiness was the rule.

Trix however didn't fare too badly, and indeed stayed with the by now widowed Mrs Holloway from time to time after her parents had taken her brother away. Rudyard had been a very wilful child in India, used to bossing the servants around, so perhaps at least in part his apparent misery with life in Southsea was a reaction to having some discipline applied.[23]

The early 1880s were golden years for literary Portsmouth. Southsea was now undisputedly the fashionable part of town. In the middle of the decade, it acquired its own (short-lived) railway branch line. The rural lane of Dickens's time was now called King's Road, and had become a thriving shopping centre.

Can we fantasise about a little boy who became author of several bestselling novels being taken by his mother into a draper's shop in King's Road, and there being served by a young man who was to write the bestselling novel of 1917, *Mr Britling sees it through* (and much else besides)? Could they have passed in the street a young medical practitioner taking a break from his surgery a little way up the road on the other side who was soon to publish stories about the most famous detective in fiction? Did they encounter a Portsmouth Grammar School boy who was to write a novel from which probably the finest of the Ealing comedy films was adapted? Might they have bumped into another young boy with his Master at Arms father on a shopping trip from his home in New Road (development by now stretching to Copnor), who became one of the most prolific-ever authors of boys' adventure stories? The little boy with his mother was Arthur Hutchinson, the future author of the boys' stories was Percy F. Westerman, the young man in the draper's shop was H.G. Wells, the doctor was Arthur Conan Doyle and the grammar school boy was Roy Horniman.

Roy Horniman, 1868 -1930, was born in Southsea, the son of a Paymaster-in-Chief of the Royal Navy.[24] He attended Portsmouth Grammar School from 1883 to 1885, when his address was 2 Bessborough Gardens, Cottage Grove. He went on to the stage in 1887 and had a successful career as a manager and producer. He also wrote many plays and adaptations of novels for the theatre, and latterly the cinema. He also wrote several novels himself, and his *Israel Rank* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907) became the basis, some years after his death, for the very successful Ealing comedy film *Kind hearts and coronets*.

Percy F(rancis) **Westerman** was born on 18 May 1876, in his parents' home at 41 Kensington Terrace, New Road, Portsmouth (not to be confused with another Kensington Terrace that had once stood somewhere around the eastern extremity of Greetham Street).[25] His father, William Westerman, is described on the birth certificate as a Master at Arms. This was a petty officer rank in the Royal Navy. According to the 1901 census, William was born in Leeds; it has yet to be established when he moved to Portsmouth.

Percy was admitted to Portsmouth Grammar School in May 1890, his address by then being 55 Campbell Road, Southsea. At school, he was in the same class as Cyril Garbett, subsequently vicar of St Mary's, Portsea, and later Archbishop of York. After leaving school he became an accounts clerk in the dockyard, his poor eyesight precluding his preferred career

Percy Westerman in Home Guard uniform. There is a story that he joined the Guard, which had a water-borne patrol, after pleasure boating on the Frome was banned.
(Courtesy of Nigel Gossop and Misses Mary & Janet Snell)

in the navy. He did, however, serve as a Sunday school teacher for a time at St Mary's Mission, in Fratton Road. The *Kelly's Directory* ... for 1901 shows him living at 60 Bath Road.

Westerman's early published efforts were in magazines about yachting, boating or cycling and he also contributed a piece about the Gunwharf to the National Union of Teachers' conference souvenir guide to Portsmouth in 1904. His first novel was *A lad of grit: a story of adventure on land and sea in Restoration times* (London, etc: Blackie and Son, 1909, *recte* 1908). This provoked some interest in the local magazine *Pink's Pictorial*. The issue for Xmas 1908 has a brief biographical note about Westerman, followed by a short story by him (to page 13) entitled *The prisoner of war: a tale of Portchester Castle during the Napoleonic wars.*[26] Over 175 novels followed, many appearing first as serials in *The Boys' Own Paper* and *Scout*, often adventure stories set at sea, but others on land and in the air, on desert islands or involving treasure hunts. His output continued until his death in 1959.

From about 1920, he lived on a houseboat on the River Frome in Dorset, and latterly on land at Poole and then Wareham. *A lad of grit* has the hero travelling from Rake to Portsmouth and sundry other scenes set in the town. *The young cavalier: a story of the civil wars* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1927), has some early scenes in Portsmouth, and features Colonel Goring, the governor of Portsmouth at the start of the civil war, and *The sea monarch* (London: A. & C. Black, 1912) opens in Portsmouth harbour. Westerman's books are now collected more for their covers than their contents, but here is yet another son of our city who provided a great deal of entertainment for his readers in his time. His son, J.F.C. Westerman, also went on to write boys' stories.

Another personage who spent only a short time in Portsmouth, but who achieved greatness as an author and whose experience there found its way into at least two of his novels was **H**(erbert) **G**(eorge)**Wells**, 1866-1946. He was the fourth child of Joseph and Sarah Wells, his father a professional cricketer (who once took four wickets in four balls in a county match) and latterly unsuccessful small trader, and his mother latterly housekeeper at Uppark House, near Harting. His apprenticeship at Hide's Drapery Emporium, on the west corner of what is now St Paul's Road and King's Road, between 1881 and 1883 was his unsuccessful fourth start in a career.[27]

Wells profoundly disliked the experience of working at Hide's, not so much the physical difficulty of the work as its boring drudgery. He tells us: "Hyde was an exceptionally good employer ... yet I still recall those two years of incarceration as the most unhappy hopeless period of my life".[28] One of Wells's previous starts to a career had also been in the drapery trade, so perhaps some of what found its way into the novels was a conflation of the two episodes. The eponymous hero of the novel *Kipps* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905) begins his career in a draper's shop, but in Folkestone: "A vast interminable place it seemed to Kipps, with unending shining counters and innumerable faultlessly dressed young men and presently Houri-like young women staring at him. Here there was a long vista of gloves dangling from overhead rods, there ribbons and baby-linen." Mr Polly, of *The history of Mr Polly* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1910), appears to have worked in Portsmouth before running away to Kent:

> He was apprenticed in one of those large, rather low-class establishments which sell everything, from pianos and furniture to books and millinery, a department store in fact, The Port Burdock Drapery Bazaar at Port Burdock, one of the three townships that are grouped around the Port Burdock naval dockyards. There he remained six years.

Mr Polly's accommodation, though comparable with Wells's at Hide's (see below), is unsympathetically described:

> The first apprentices' dormitory was a long bleak room with six beds, six chests of drawers and looking glasses and a number of boxes of wood or tin; it opened into a still longer and bleaker room of eight beds, and this into a third apartment with yellow grained paper and American

King's Road, Southsea, about 1906, looking east from the junction with King's Terrace. Hide's is on the left, with the second set of awnings.
(Portsmouth City Library, Local Studies Section, 37940, Illustrations, Southsea)

cloth tables, which was the dining-room by day and the men's sitting and smoking-room after nine.

Wells says *this* of *his* accommodation:

> The dining-room was airy, well lit and upstairs, far more agreeable than the underground cellar at Rodgers and Denyer's [a previous employer], and instead of the squalid rooms … with truckle beds and no accommodation for personal belongings … high partitions divided the dormitory into cubicles and everyone had a private chest of drawers, looking glass, pegs, a chair and so forth. For his time and trade, Mr. Edwin Hyde was a fairly civilized employer. He had even provided a reading room, with a library of several hundred books …[29]

An early novel, *The wheels of chance: a holiday adventure*, first published in New York in 1896, also begins in a drapery emporium (in Putney). The hero goes for a cycling tour of the south coast. Chapter 29, *The unexpected anecdote*, describes his adventures between Havant and Fareham.

In 1883, Wells ran away from Hide's, found a post as a student assistant teacher, and won a scholarship as a teacher-trainer in the Normal School of Science in London the following year. But literary endeavours soon became a full-time career for him.

A(rthur) **S**(tuart) **M**(enteth) (or Stewart or Stuart-Menteth) **Hutchinson**, 1879-1971, was a novelist with over 30 titles listed in the British Library catalogue. His most successful book was *If winter comes* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921). It headed the bestseller list of 1922, and he had another title *This freedom* (same publisher) in the top ten that year. Further top ten appearances occurred in 1923 and 1925.[30]

Arthur was born in India, the son of an Indian Army officer. He studied medicine at St Thomas's Hospital, London, but turned to journalism, and was editor of the *Daily Graphic*, 1912-16. As far as is known, none of the novels have any local connection, but over half his autobiography (whence all the following quotations are derived) deals with the few years of his childhood spent in Southsea.[31]

The family came to Southsea around 1883/4 and lodged with a Mr and Mrs Martin "in a substantial corner house …". "Southsea Common [was] just up the road from our house." Later, when Arthur was "close on six" they went to a house of their own (but still rented), Martingale Lodge. He recalls riding by goat-chaise and horse-trams, and the shops in King's Road.

A.S.M. Hutchinson, a portrait published as a cigarette card by Wills's cigarettes in 1937.

"Our own shops, the usual collection of outskirts small traders, ran a short way down each side of the corner at which I would stand to watch the trains." He further recalls that he must have been present at the opening of Southsea railway station and remembers the inauguration of Canoe Lake in 1886. For a time he went to "Miss Colebrook's school for little boys". His elder brother, nicknamed Perry, was at Portsmouth Grammar School from 1885-7, and the family's address given in the school's records is Stanley Lodge, Burgoyne Road.[32] How this reconciles with Martingale Lodge recorded above is yet to be resolved, but the shops in the Strand would tally with his observations about "our own shops" from a Burgoyne Road address, and he could have watched the trains at the Southsea terminus in Granada Road, at the other side of the Strand.

The family moved to Devonshire while Arthur was still a child, but he deserves a mention as a best-selling novelist with albeit tenuous Portsmouth connections.

In *Portsmouth Magazine* for May 1977, there is an article comparing the enthusiasm with which Portsmouth treats Charles Dickens compared with the relatively little attention that is paid to the city as the 'birthplace' of Sherlock Holmes. True, there is now a plaque on the wall of the block of flats in Elm Grove on the site of where (Sir) **Arthur** (Ignatius) **Conan Doyle**, 1859-1930, lived and practised medicine from 1882 until 1890, and one can find Conan Road and Doyle Avenue in North End, but the significance of the composition of the first

Dr Conan Doyle's former surgery, 1 Bush Villas, photographed between the wars.
(Courtesy of *The News*, Portsmouth; Portsmouth City Library, Local Studies Section, 914.22792, Southsea streets, Elm Grove)

stories about Sherlock Holmes, one of the best-known characters in English literature, is often underrated.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh in 1859, and graduated MB from the university there in 1881.[33] (His MD thesis was submitted in 1885.) He came to Portsmouth in 1882, probably in June, after spells as locum in Birmingham and Plymouth and some sea-faring experience as nominally a ship's doctor. Aided by a member of Portsmouth Rugby Club with whom he quickly became friends, he was able to rent 1 Bush Villas, Elm Grove. He began with little capital, and all but his consulting room was at first sparsely furnished. His ten-year-old brother Innes joined him to act as page-boy, and the doctor himself recalled going out after dark to polish his brass plate in order to conceal from his neighbours the fact that he couldn't afford a housemaid. At that time, the subsequently re-aligned Green Road and what is now Castle Road made a cross-roads with King's Road/Elm Grove, and the frequent accidents at what was even then a busy junction are said to have brought him some welcome business.

Doyle had already tried his hand at literary activity, his *The mystery of the Sasassa Valley* appearing in *Chamber's Journal* for September 1879, and offerings published in magazines like *London Society, Bow Bells, All the Year Round* and *Boy's Own Paper* at three or four guineas a time provided a more than useful supplement to his income. *The captain of the Pole Star*, published in *Temple Bar* in January 1883 had brought him ten guineas, and the first story of substance written in Southsea, *J. Habakuk Jephson's statement*, published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in July 1884, earned him 29 guineas – a year's rent on his premises.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when established as an author.
(PMRS)

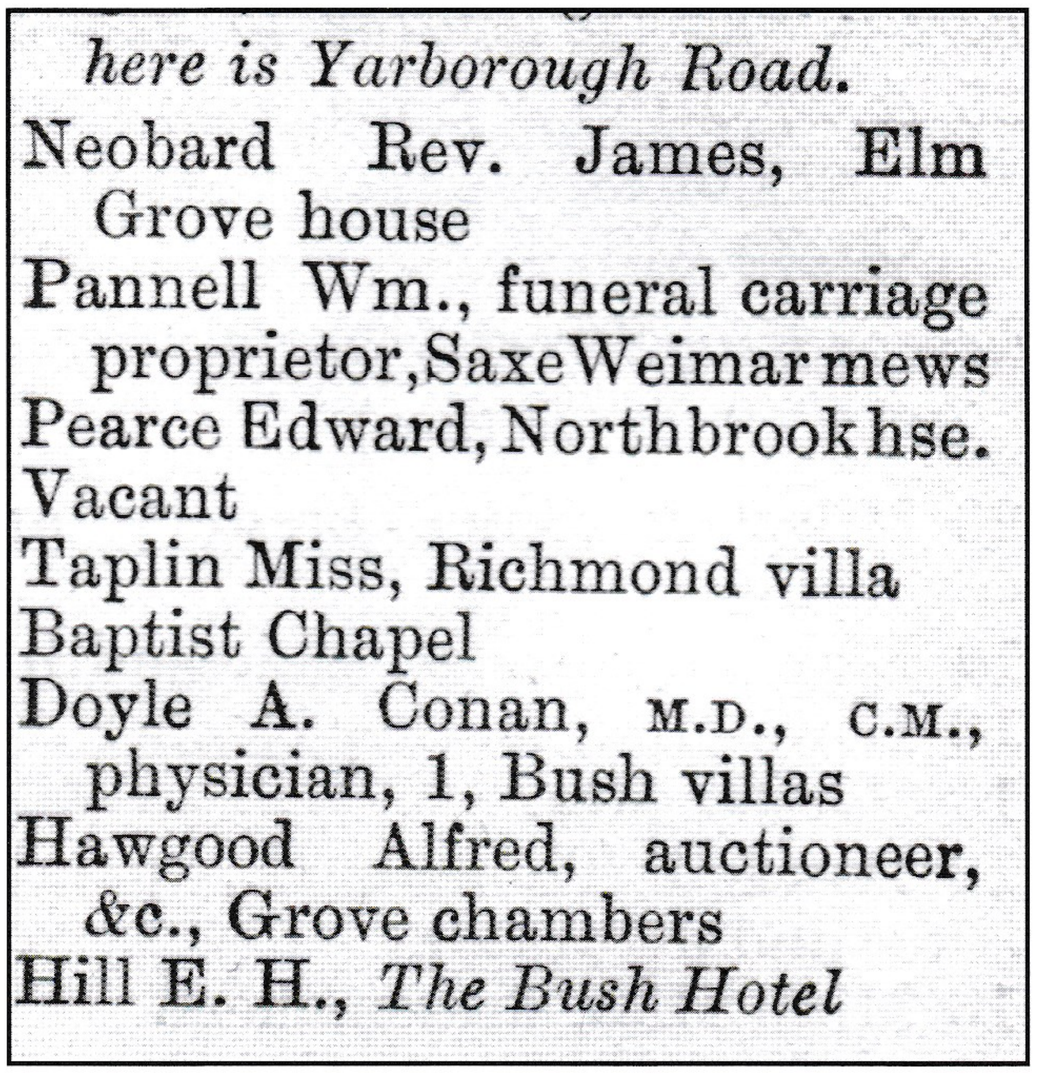
Doyle was a good self-publicist, and he realised how valuable social contacts were in bringing him patients. He played football enthusiastically (and sometimes pseudonymously – football being perhaps *not* the game for a gentleman), won prizes for bowls and billiards, and played cricket for the Portsmouth CC, scoring at least one century and once taking the wicket of W.G. Grace for a duck. A poem celebrates this feat.[34] The first verse suffices:

> Once in my heyday of cricket,
> Oh, day I shall ever recall!
> I captured that glorious wicket,
> The greatest, the grandest of all.

The poem goes on to suggest that Grace top-edged an attempted hook at a long-hop and skied the ball to the wicket-keeper.[35] Doyle also became a leading light in the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society, whose president happened to be a Dr James Watson. (The first name of Watson, Holmes's companion, was John, although in one story – presumably a slip of Doyle's pen – his wife refers to him as James.)

All these activities helped bring patients to his practice, although he rarely lacked time to continue the writing that brought in welcome extra funds. In 1885 he married, and later that year conceived the idea of a detective novel, but one that would feature a detective very different from the melodramatic creations rife at the time. Doyle's professor at Edinburgh, Joseph Bell, had developed his powers of observation and deduction beyond simply diagnosing his patients' complaints to include conclusions about their circumstances and status as well. Similarly Doyle's detective would use logical deduction, and thus was Sherlock Holmes conceived. The first novel about him, *A study in scarlet,* took a long time to interest publishers but eventually Ward Lock paid £25 for the entire copyright, and it appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887.

An extract from Stevens' 1890 directory of Portsmouth.
(PMRS)



here is Yarborough Road.
Neobard Rev. James, Elm Grove house
Pannell Wm., funeral carriage proprietor, Saxe Weimar mews
Pearce Edward, Northbrook hse.
Vacant
Taplin Miss, Richmond villa
Baptist Chapel
Doyle A. Conan, M.D., C.M., physician, 1, Bush villas
Hawgood Alfred, auctioneer, &c., Grove chambers
Hill E. H., *The Bush Hotel*

Doyle then wrote *Micah Clark …*, a novel of the 17th century involving the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion, published in London by Longmans in 1889, and had embarked on *The White Company*, this time set in the 14th century, when an offer came from the American editor of *Lippincott's Magazine* for another Sherlock Holmes story. *The sign of four* was the result, published in the February 1890 issue. Doyle left Portsmouth that year, and *The White Company* was eventually published in London by Smith, Elder and Company in 1891. Sherlock Holmes went from strength to strength, appearing in two more full-length novels and 56 short stories.

It is pleasing to note that Doyle maintained an albeit tenuous link with the Portsmouth literary scene by developing an admiration for the works of George Meredith. He wrote several articles about him, and gave an address entitled 'The Genius of George Meredith' to the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society on 20 Nov 1888 and repeated it to the Upper Norwood Literary and Scientific Society in November 1892. The text of this address, together with some correspondence between the two men, is preserved in the Portsmouth City Records Office.[36] Sherlock Holmes, too, was apparently an enthusiast of Meredith. In a moment of relaxation during his investigation of *The Boscombe Valley mystery* (1891), he says: "And now let us talk about George Meredith, if you please, and we shall leave all minor matters until to-morrow".

Doyle later contributed extensively to the literature of Spiritualism. One of the residences at which he participated in séances was that of a solicitor, **Douglas Morey Ford**, who operated from 12 High Street.[37] The British Library general catalogue lists two novels by him, *Kate Savage* (London: publisher not given, 1873) and *A time of terror* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1908). Further research may confirm Ford as yet another Portsmouth novelist.

It is perhaps disappointing that there are few local references in Doyle's work. *Micah Clark* begins in Havant, and in the third paragraph of *A study in scarlet* Watson tells how, having been wounded in the second Afghan war he "was despatched, accordingly, in the troopship *Orontes*, and landed a month later on Portsmouth jetty…".

There are a few passing mentions of our area in the Sherlock Holmes short stories. In *The five orange pips* (1891), the client's father "returning from Fareham" where he had been to visit a major "in command of one of the forts on Portsdown Hill" had "fallen over one of the deep chalk-pits that abound in the neighbourhood". In *The cardboard box* (1893), Watson, suffering in the summer heat in London, "yearned for the glades of the New Forest or the shingle of Southsea". In *The naval treaty* (also 1893), Holmes and Watson "were soon whirling up [from Woking] in a Portsmouth train" and in *The missing three-quarter* (1904), there is a dog "something between a beagle and a foxhound" named Pompey.

Only in *His last bow* (1917) does Portsmouth have any significance. Holmes is acting as a double agent, providing (false) naval intelligence from Portsmouth dockyard, supposedly gleaned from a "gunner". We learn that the German master spy has his information in various pigeon-holes, one of which is labelled "Portsmouth forts", and he discusses with a colleague a communication superscribed "Portsmouth". Holmes refers to his "landlady down Fratton way" (a local group of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts called themselves "The Fratton Lodgers") and when the adventure is over, Holmes confides to Watson that "it would brighten my declining years to see a German cruiser navigating the Solent according to the minefield plans which I have furnished".

Disappointing overall, perhaps, but at least Portsmouth/Southsea can claim some glory in being the place where Sherlock Holmes was devised, developed and first written about.

(Sir Edward Montague) **Compton Mackenzie**, 1883-1972, is probably not an author who springs immediately to mind as having Portsmouth connections. The link is with the family of Father Dolling, mission priest at St Agatha's church, Landport, from 1885 until early 1896, and author of *Ten years in a Portsmouth slum*. The Mackenzie family knew the Dollings, and Compton's aunt Kate was a particular friend of Father Dolling's sister, Josephine. He writes "[Dolling] had helped my mother and my Aunt Isabel during those difficult days of Sadler's Wells, and one of his sisters, Josephine, lived with my aunt Mrs [Kate] Crowe when she became a widow in 1890".[38]

The young Mackenzie knew Dolling as "Uncle Bob", and all the Dolling sisters were his "aunts". He recounts his disappointment on meeting Dolling for the first time, and discovering that he was a very fat man.[39] However, he appears to have sung in St Agatha's choir from time to time: "I was allowed to think that by wearing a surplice and singing in the choir I really was a chorister".[40] He later offers a rare piece of information about Dolling's style: "Dolling always preached with his eyes closed and hardly used a gesture. His eloquence lay in the extreme simplicity of his words and in the complete sincerity of his beautiful voice".[41]

Mackenzie's novel *The altar steps*, first published by Cassell and Co. in 1922, has five chapters set in Portsmouth around 1890. It describes the life of a young man destined to become a priest. For a time, he works with Father Dolling at St Agatha's (the Winchester College Mission), Landport, thinly disguised as Father Rowley, St Agnes's, Silchester College Mission and Chatsea, respectively. The atmosphere of the area, the personality of Father Dolling and life in his parsonage house are well conveyed. The episode ends with Rowley's/Dolling's resignation over the problem of the altar for the dead.

This is how the area around St Agnes's/St Agatha's church is described. (Whereas now the church stands hemmed in by a main road and shopping development, in those days it was surrounded by a maze of poor streets infested with pubs and brothels.) The text owes much to Dolling's own book:

> It was a small parish … of something over a thousand small houses, few of which were less than a century old. The streets were narrow and crooked, mostly named after bygone admirals or forgotten sea-fights; the romantic and picturesque quarter of a great naval port to the casual glance of a passer-by, but heartbreaking to any except the most courageous resident on account of its over-crowding and tumble-down condition … Most of the brothels and many of the public houses had been eliminated from the district, and in their place flourished various clubs and guilds.

And here's how we first encounter Father Rowley/Dolling:

> Father Rowley was a very corpulent man with a voice of such compassion and with an eloquence so simple that when he ascended into the pulpit, closed his eyes, and began to speak, his listeners invariably closed their eyes and followed that voice whithersoever it led them.

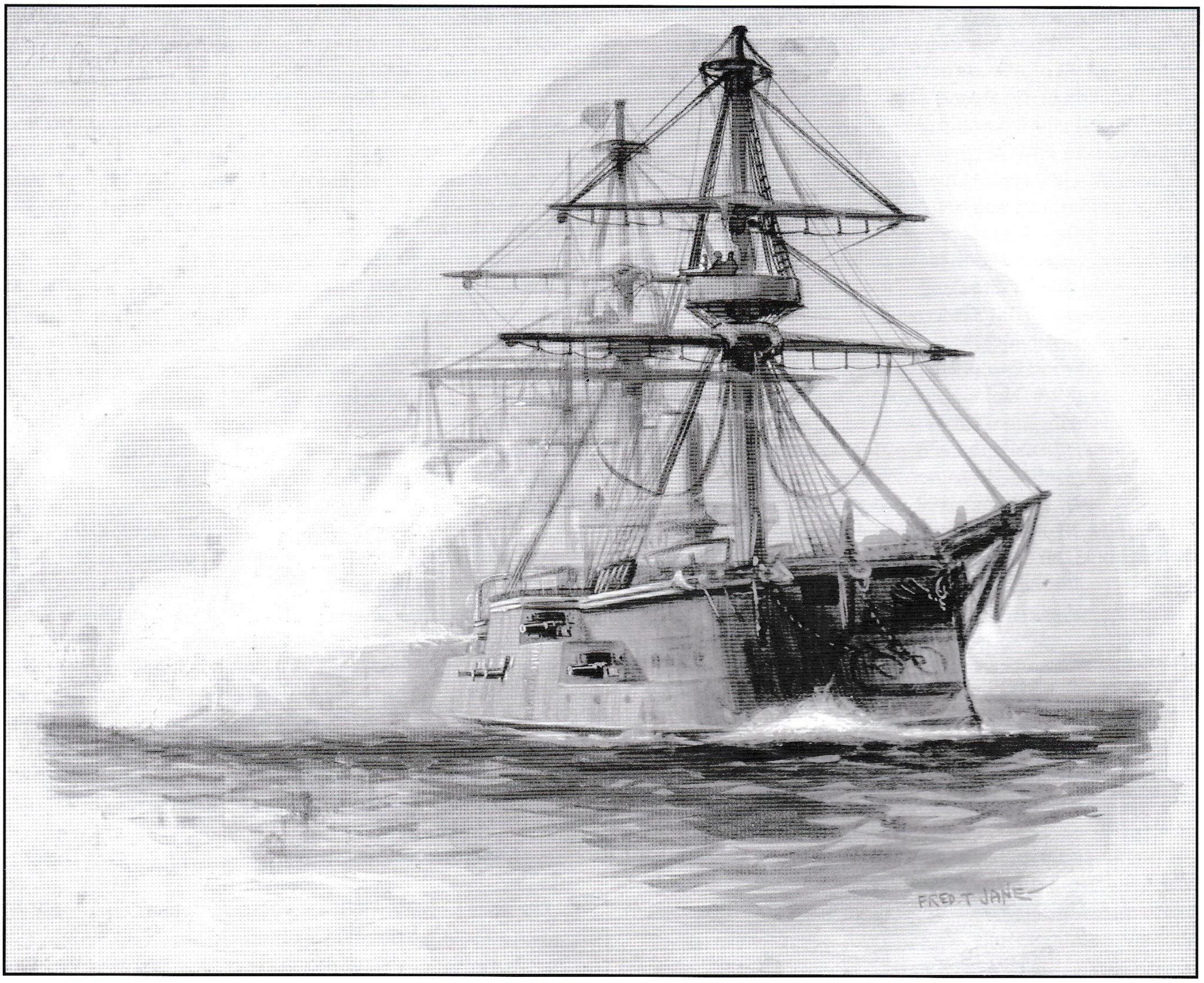
The protagonist later meets Rowley in a train:

> [Rowley had] a small black bag beside him, so small that [the protagonist] wondered how it could possibly contain the night attire of so fat a man, [who] was sitting back in a corner with a large pipe in his mouth. He was wearing one of those square felt hats sometimes seen on the heads of farmers …

While Mackenzie certainly had a copy of Dolling's *Ten years in a Portsmouth slum* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1896) and probably one or other of the biographies beside him, there seems no doubt that what he wrote of him and his work was inspired by a genuine affection, still remembered after 30 or more years.

Portsmouth's new Town Hall, (now the Guildhall), opened in 1890, and the Municipal Technical Institute began life in

Alexandria: the first shot!, *a gouache painted by Fred Jane of the bombardment of the port carried out by the Royal Navy in 1882. The ship is HMS* Alexandra.
(PMRS 517/1970)



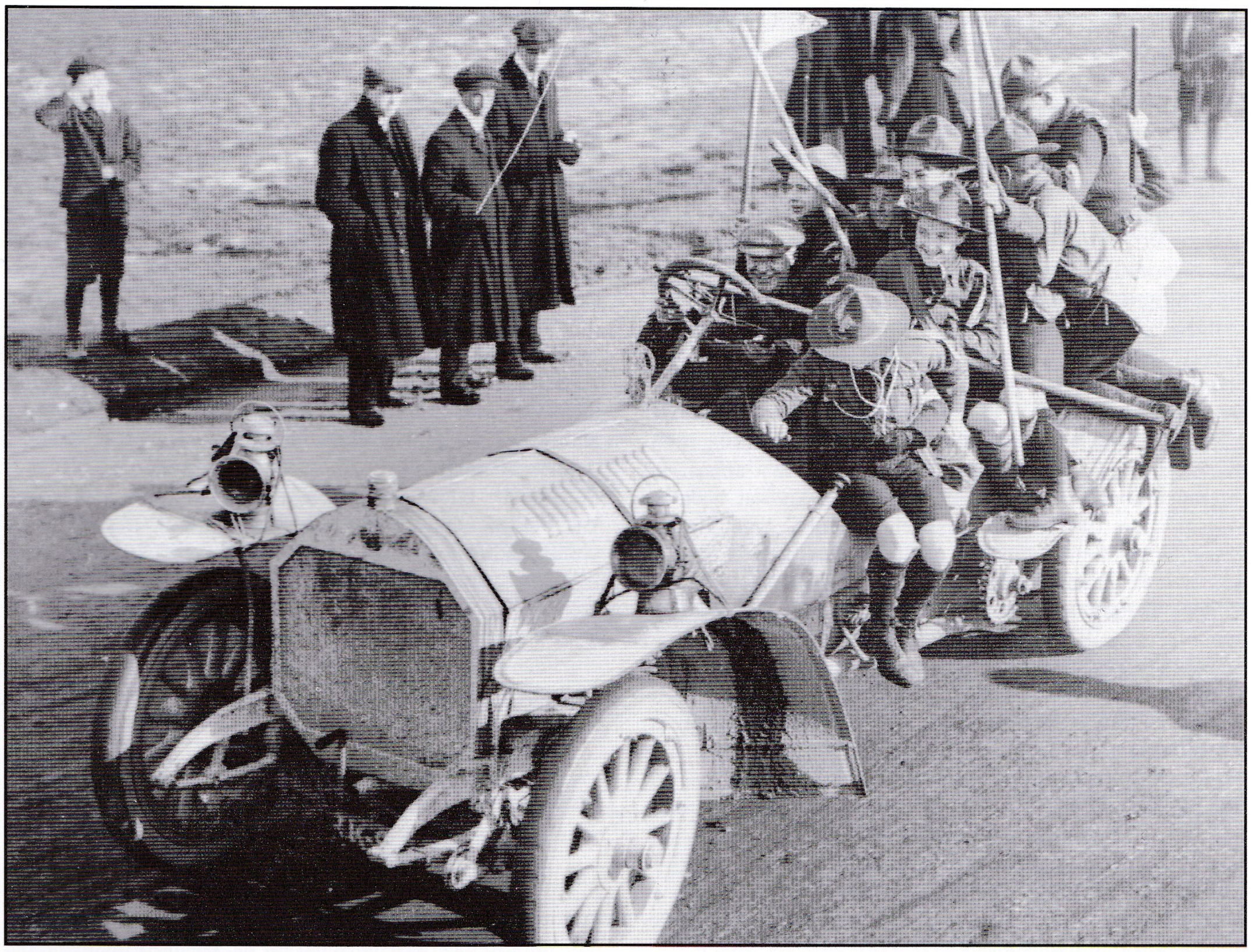
Arundel Street in 1894. The civic centre was irrevocably moving from High Street to Landport, but the two significant events of the decade for our story, the birth of Richard Aldington in1896, and the arrival of Fred Jane in 1897, took place in Old Portsmouth and Southsea respectively.

(Edward Godfree) **'Richard' Aldington**, 1892-1962, is another Portsmouth-born personage who achieved distinction in the world of letters away from his native town. He was born at 50 High Street, Portsmouth, and his father is recorded on his birth certificate as a "bookseller and stationer", which tallies with what directories of the time tell us about the address although not with the proprietorship of the business. However, in the *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, his father is described as a "solicitor's clerk and amateur author" and after the family had left Portsmouth, his father practised law in Dover.[42] There is one glimpse of what may be Portsmouth in Richard's autobiography: "From the bedroom windows I saw a large asphalt yard with a row of dust bins and the backs of houses. From the other windows I saw the High Street, full of umbrellas and horses; and opposite, the fronts of houses with shops."[43] The family moved to Kent when Richard was still a small boy, and Portsmouth doesn't feature much in his life again.

Richard Aldington embarked on a literary career, and soon made the acquaintance of several distinguished authors, among them Ford Madox Ford, W.B. Yeats, Harold Monro and Ezra Pound, through whom he met his first wife H.D. (the poet Hilda Doolittle).

His early years were devoted to writing poems – he was one of the first 'Imagists' – and articles, and he was also at various times literary editor of *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*, reviewer of French books for the *Times Literary Supplement* and assistant editor of T.S. Eliot's *Criterion.* A novel, *Death of a hero*, published in 1929, brought him his first great popular success. Among the later of the some 200 titles he published altogether were controversial biographies of D.H. Lawrence, whom he knew well, and T.E. Lawrence, whom he did not! The hostile reception to the latter caused most of his works to

Fred Jane helped organise war-game field days for boy scouts between 1909 and 1914. Here his car has been 'captured' on Southsea Common.
(PMRS 517/1970)



go out of print almost overnight. He finally settled in France, where he died in 1962.

Our one departure from authors whose names are remembered primarily as writers of fiction must be (John) **Fred**(erick) **T**(homas) **Jane**, 1865-1916, whose name is now a household word in the titles of definitive books about ships and aircraft, issued by the firm which still bears his name, now Jane's Information Group.[44] Having said this, he also produced several works of science fiction.

Fred Jane was educated in Exeter and, in spite of his father's wish for him to go into the army, he began life as an artist and soon built up a reputation as an accurate illustrator of naval scenes. He was commissioned by *Pictorial World* to cover the combined German and British fleets in Spithead in 1889 and their manoeuvres afterward, and he went on to provide illustrations for a number of books and magazines.

He was a prolific writer as well as artist, and produced several works of fiction before his seminal books on ships and aircraft. The novel *Blake of the Rattlesnake* appeared in 1895, and then followed novels predicting aircraft, television and laser holograms, for example *The incubated girl* (1896), *To Venus in five seconds* (1897) and *The violet flame* (1899), that even features a devastating weapon with the characteristics of a nuclear bomb. He planned a book called *Ironclads of the world* in 1882, which eventually saw the light of day as *Jane's all the world's fighting ships* in 1898, becoming *Jane's fighting ships* in 1905. As early as 1909 there appeared his first edition of the book which became *Jane's all the world's aircraft*.

Fred and his wife lived in Fulham until moving to 6 Elphinstone Road, Southsea, in December 1897, and the next year to number 17, which he referred to as Tressillian House in early editions of *Fighting ships*. He stood for parliament in the 1906 general election as an Independent Naval candidate, and came bottom of the polls, perhaps owing to the eccentricity of his campaign. He got involved in politics again in the 1910 election, this time offering his support to the Conservative candidate, Admiral Beresford. Fred was a lover of practical jokes throughout his life, and in January 1909 he 'kidnapped' the socialist MP Victor Grayson for a day when he was in Portsmouth to address the Labour Party conference, driving him to Petersfield when he should have been giving his speech. Fred also involved himself with attempts to root out spies.

He continued writing throughout this time, and contributed a weekly column to the *Hampshire Telegraph* from 1907 to 1915 (with a short break in 1912), and also produced a naval war game. He moved to Bedhampton around the end of 1910, but returned to Southsea early in 1916 (26 Clarence Parade) where he died in March that year. A plaque on the wall of the building that replaced his home commemorates his association with the place.

The first decade of the new century saw two important births, those of Lawrie Green and Olivia Manning.

In *Hampshire: the County Magazine* for November 1991, there is an article by John Edgar Mann entitled "Portsmouth origins of the 'Irish Dostoevsky'". The article is about (Frederick Lawrence) **'Lawrie' Green.** We are not told by whom the Dostoevsky comparison was made, but drawing from this article, and the few snippets about him that appear in reference books, we learn that Lawrie Green was born in Portsmouth in 1902, one of the six children of George Edward Green, sometime headmaster of St John's Roman Catholic school.[45] He attended St Luke's School, and later the Salesian College at Farnborough. While recuperating from frequent bouts of ill health, he enjoyed swimming and fishing from Southsea beach, and wandering around the docks and factories of the town. He entered the world of work as a chartered accountant, but in spite of losing a leg below the knee from tuberculosis he embarked on something of a wandering life before settling with his wife in Belfast in 1934. His first novel was published that year. His *Odd man out* (1945) was made into a successful film in 1950, starring James Mason and Robert Newton. Green co-authored the film script with R.C. Sherriff. Dealing with the aftermath of an IRA raid, the film, according to one source, is "considered one of the finest cinematic treatments of an Irish subject...".[46]

Lawrie Green's *Clouds in the wind,* (London: Michael Joseph, 1950), is a somewhat rambling novel dealing with marital problems, spies and crooks in the 1930s and 1940s. Much of the action takes place in Portsmouth (thinly disguised as Camport) and in a house in Purbrook, but there is little concrete description. A principal character is Charlie, king of the Portsmouth underworld, who turns out to have been working on the side of the law all along. We get a glimpse of the city when, having arrived in Camport late one evening, the following day the protagonist gets lost:

> I remembered how, on the previous night, I had come from the railway station and wandered along Commercial Road to the right and, after failing to obtain a room at any hotel, had turned back and proceeded past the gutted Guildhall. If only I could now find my way to the Guildhall Square.
>
> I came out of the maze of little slum streets to a road with tram-lines. I followed them hopefully. Within five minutes I reached the Square.

The Greens moved to Bristol in 1951, and Lawrie died there two years later. He is buried in Havant cemetery, next to his brother George.

Olivia Manning, 1908-80, is yet another person who was born in Portsmouth but who achieved fame as a novelist elsewhere. She was born on 2 March 1908 (at 134 Laburnum Grove where, according to *Kelly's directories,* her father, another naval officer, continued to reside until after the war). Her schooling is something of a mystery. She went to Lynton House school in Kingston Crescent for a time, but other sources say she went to Portsmouth Grammar School.[47] This school only admitted girls very recently. Nor did she attend Portsmouth High School. No pupil records of the time survive from the state schools, so her *alma mater* still awaits positive identity.

Olivia's childhood was not a happy one. Her father was an enthusiastic womaniser and her mother much given to nagging. After schooling, she first worked in an architect's office in Portsmouth, but as soon as she could she moved to London. Her Balkan trilogy, *The great fortune* (1960), *The spoilt city* (1962) and *Friends and heroes* (1965) – all first published in London by Heinemann – are perhaps her most significant works. Her novel *A different face*, also by Heinemann in 1953, tells of post-war Portsmouth, disguised as Coldmouth, as the chief cause of an expatriate's depression.

Coldmouth is partly recognisable, partly imaginary. There were cliffs at the end of its promenade, but

> ... on the other side of the Harbour Row was the dockyard wall. Round its seaward end appeared the great, grey stern of the battleship lying at the main dockyard berth ... There were gaps in the famous row of harbour public-houses
>
> ... In Coldmouth, respect was not for the naval families cheeseparing on low pay, and less for widows with their mouse-meal pensions, but for the business-men who ran the city in their own interests and each year bought a bigger car, or a bigger house, and took it in turns to become mayor.

Coldmouth had a Royal Beach Hotel, a Harbour Station, and a district known as "Old Coldmouth". *The play room* of 1969 (same publisher) has Isle of Wight connections.

The departure of Olivia Manning and Lawrie Green, presumably in the late 1920s, are compensated for in our story by the arrival of Nevil Shute and James Clavell in the following decade.

Nevil Shute Norway, 1899-1960, is another Portsmouth author by association. He was an aeronautical engineer by training and had worked on the airship R.100 project. In March 1933 he brought his company Airspeed Ltd (founded 1931) to a new factory on Portsmouth airport; one of the buildings still stands in an industrial estate near the Anchorage Park housing development. He remained joint managing director of the firm until 1938, by which year he had already achieved some success as a novelist and had sold the film rights to two of his books, *Lonely road* and *Ruined city*. After war service in the RNVR,

Nevil Shute Norway, centre, with, to his left, two other directors of Airspeed, Hessell Tiltman with pipe and Lord Grimthorpe, standing in front of a Courier, Portsmouth Airport 1933-4.
(Courtesy of *The Flight* Collection, PMRS 380/1989)

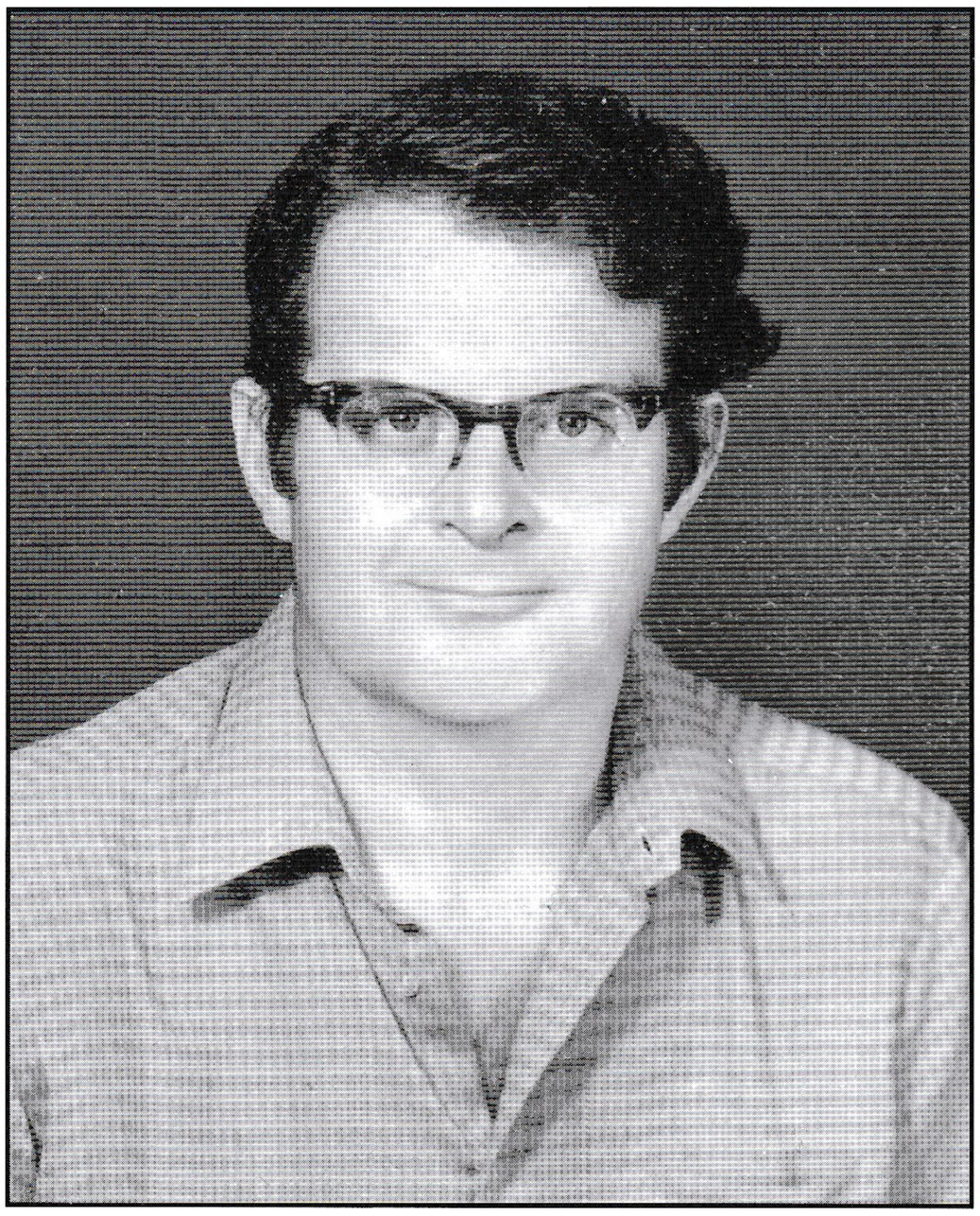
he settled in Australia and maintained a steady output of novels, several more of which were filmed, the most famous of these being *A town like Alice*.[48]

His early novel *So disdained* (London: Cassell and Co., 1928) has some local references. *Landfall*: *a channel story* (London; Toronto: William Heinemann Limited, 1940) is a contemporary adventure/love story. Portsmouth and its surroundings form most of the background, although there is little significant description. *Requiem for a wren*, (Heinemann, 1955), has a few mentions of Portsmouth. *What happened to the Corbetts* (Heinemann, 1939) is set in Southampton, but according to a note provided by the author himself and tipped into the copy in the Portsmouth Central Library, the locale is based on Helena Road, Southsea, where he was living at the time.

Happily, Portsmouth's association with this author is commemorated, although perhaps obscurely, in the name of Norway Road, which served as an approach to the airport and to Airspeed. Much more recently a Nevil Shute Road has appeared, in the nearby Portfield Industrial Estate.

Attendance at Portsmouth Grammar School from 1935 to 1940 entitles Charles Edmund Dumaresq or du Maresq (best known by his pseudonym **James**) **Clavell,** 1921-1994, to a brief mention in these pages.[49] He was another son of a transient British naval officer, having been born in Sydney, Australia. He followed his father from pillar to post, resulting in him spending his secondary school years in Portsmouth. Initially he embarked on a career in the Royal Artillery, and during the war spent two years in a Japanese POW camp. On the instigation of his wife, the ballerina and actress April Stride whom he married in 1951, he determined to work in the film industry, and eventually became a successful scriptwriter. Among his film scripts are those for *The fly* (1958), *The great escape* (1960) jointly with W. R. Burnett, and *To sir with love* (1967). He also had a number of credits as producer or director. In 1963 he became an American citizen, and in 1975 Hodder and Stoughton published his best-known work, the novel *Shogun: a novel of Japan,* which sold over 7,000,000 copies.

Graeme Kent, about 1960.
(Courtesy of Graeme Kent)



We come now to those novelists who were alive at the time of writing. No fewer than six out of the twelve to be discussed were born in the period 1929-1939, three of them in the last of those years. Is this a first, late, manifestation of the effect of universal education as provided for by the 1870 Education Act? It's difficult to find a logical way of arranging them. Three of the six were born in Portsmouth. Of those, one has lived here most of her life, another was born and brought up here, worked here for a time and then after a career elsewhere returned to Southsea to take up writing, the third moved away after university. Of the three who were born elsewhere, one went to school and college and began his career here, another was born in Gosport but worked here for a time, and the third moved to Southsea in 1976 and has lived here ever since. Somewhat arbitrarily then, these six are treated in the order of the date of their first significant novel.

Graeme Kent was born in Gloucestershire 1933. His father was in the Royal Marines and a posting to Portsmouth in 1943 saw Graeme attending Cottage Grove Junior School until 1945 and then Portsmouth Grammar School until 1949. He subsequently went to the Municipal College, and, according to the dust-jacket of the novel discussed below, the University of London, where he was welter-weight boxing champion. He did national service, mainly in Korea, and then trained as a teacher, afterwards working for a while at Church Street Primary School.

His experiences in Korea gave him material for *The Queen's corporal*, runner-up in a national TV play competition and published by Faber. On the strength of this, he got a job as a BBC producer, subsequently worked for a radio station in the Solomon Islands before returning to be a head-teacher in a primary school in Boston, Lincolnshire, where he still lives. Mr Kent has published novels, plays and also much educational material and other non-fiction.

His novel *The monkey game*, (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1964), dealing with the seedy world of all-in wrestling, is set in Lunwater, "a vulgar cheerful town dependent for its prosperity on the Dockyard, one or two large factories, the Royal Navy and the seaside tourist industry". The residential area is called Beachside, where the protagonist "turned off the sea-front and began to walk through the rock-gardens towards the row of hotels and boarding-houses standing like a set of off-white false teeth set in a permanent grin on the other side of the flower beds. The club where he worked was behind this row."

The club was based on a real one in the Palmerston Road/ Osborne Road area:[50]

> The Banjo Club occupied a large basement room in one of the rambling Victorian houses off the sea-front ... The ground floor was used as an illegal gaming establishment ... As several councillors were known to be members, the Chief Constable had so far turned a blind eye to its activities.

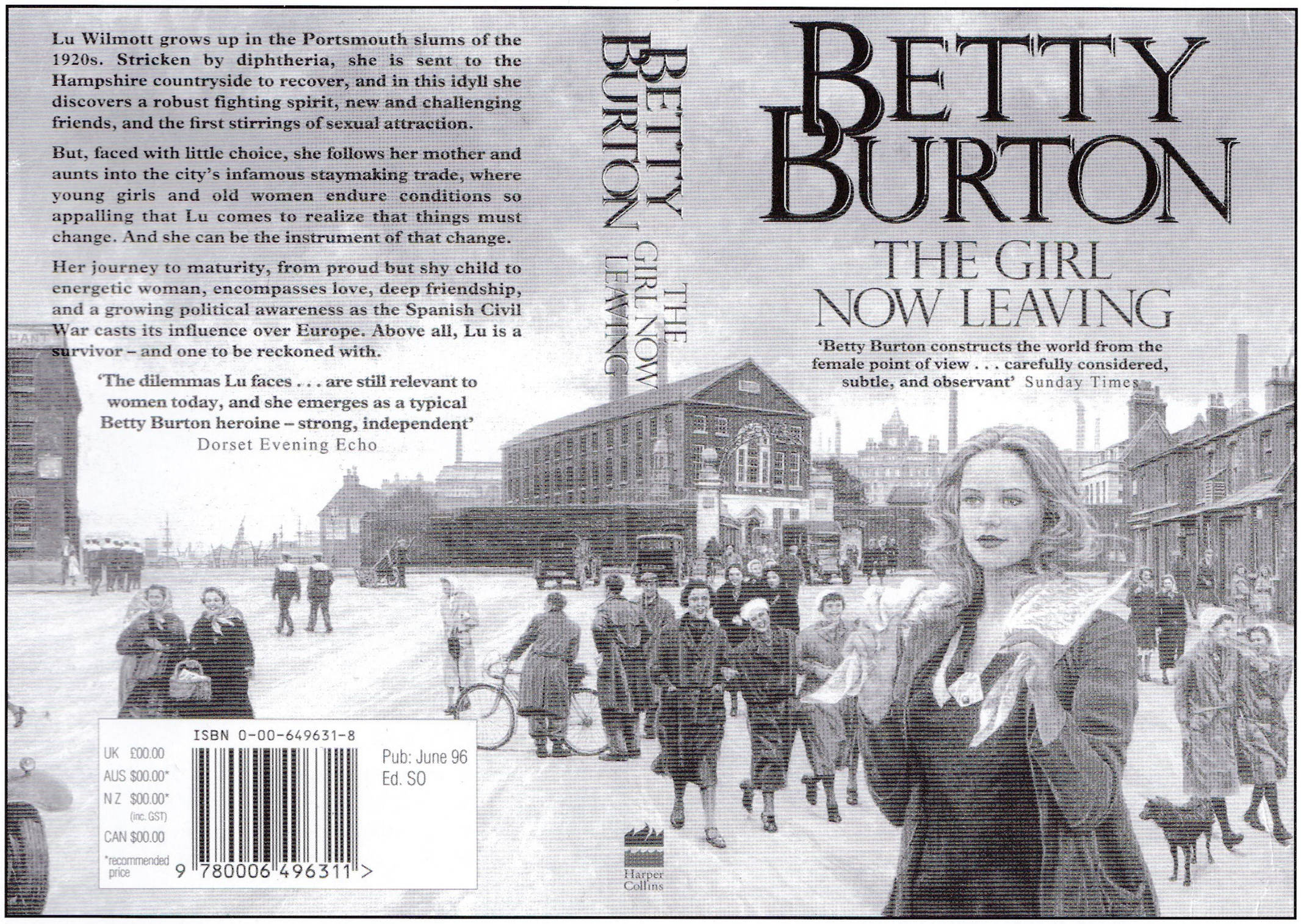
There was a "brothel distributed over the first and second floors" where the madam was generous in her bribes to the CID officers investigating it. The Banjo Club was

> frequented for the most part by the younger middle-class element, bank-clerks, insurance agents and the residue of the old boys of the local Grammar School who had not escaped to universities. Petty-officers and warrant officers of the Navy were also welcomed; their presence tended to keep out the ratings who might lower the tone of the place.

The manager, Wally, "was a tough and unostentatious homosexual, a dumpy cheerful man, very keen on amateur dramatics and a member of several local societies".

Ann Granger was born in July 1939, lived in North End, and attended the Northern Grammar School for Girls in Mayfield Road. After starting out in the army, her father joined the navy, which he left as a lieutenant in 1958 to take up a career with Esso at Fawley. But the family had been in Portsmouth for several generations, so Ann cannot be regarded as the daughter of a transient. After university, she worked in various embassies overseas, in her own words "a rubber stamp operator ... never a diplomat".[51] Her first novel was published in 1979, and since then she has published at least one book per year. Her earliest efforts were historical romances under the *nom-de-plume* Ann Hulme, and the last of these, *Captain Harland's marriage* (Richmond: Mills and Boon, 1989), is set in Portsmouth around 1850. Latterly, under her real name, Ann Granger has specialised in crime fiction.

Note the Portsmouth locations on the cover of this book by Betty Burton.
(*The girl now leaving* © Betty Burton 1995, reproduced by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd)



Betty Burton was born in 1929 in Romsey, but has lived in Portsmouth/Southsea since 1976. She has written for radio, TV and the theatre, and more than a dozen novels. Most of these are set in Hampshire. The action of the early chapters of her *Goodbye Piccadilly* (London: Harper Collins, 1991) takes place in Southsea, and there are also references to Emsworth and Gosport. The heroine of *The girl now leaving* (same publisher, 1995), worked in a Portsmouth corset factory in the 1930s. Her adventures were continued in *Not just a soldier's war* (same publisher, 1996). Ms Burton interviewed many people connected with on the corset industry while researching *The girl now leaving*; her contacts were the basis of a Portsmouth Museums and Records Service oral history project.[52]

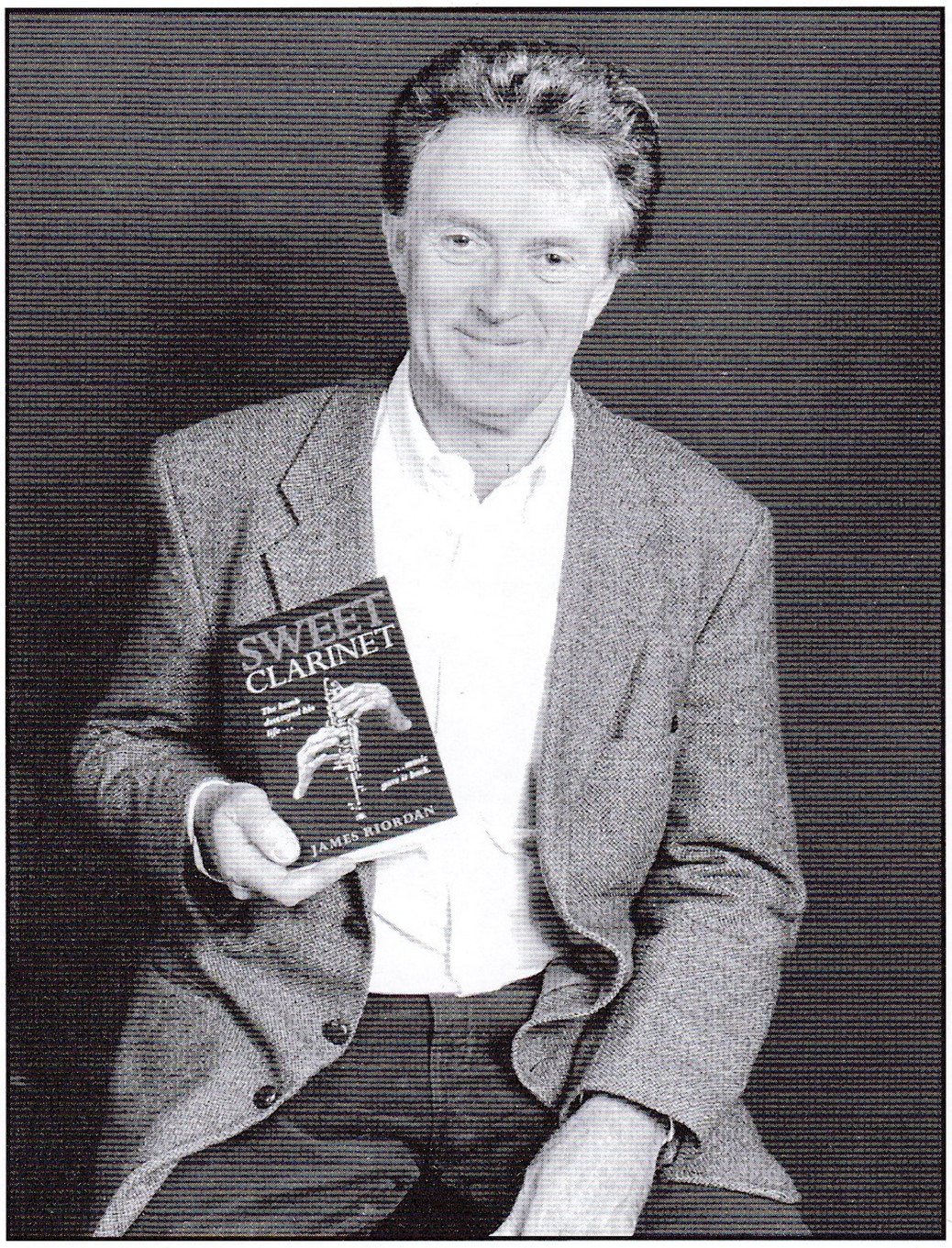
Lilian Harry was born in Gosport in 1939 and has childhood memories of the bombsites in our local area. She worked for a time in Telephone House, formerly on the south-west corner of the junction of Elm Grove and Grove Road South in Southsea, and took up writing as a second career.[53] A number of her novels are set in Portsmouth around the time of World War II and its aftermath.

Goodbye, sweetheart (London: Orion, 1994), is set in 'April Grove', a working class street in Portsmouth in 1939. There are, at the time of writing, three sequels, all from the same publisher: *The girls they left behind* (1995), set in 1940; *Keep smiling through* (1996), beginning in May 1941, and *Moonlight and lovesongs* (1997), taking the saga up to the end of the war. There have since appeared new stories about some of the other residents of the street, which also bring in the original characters. These are: *Tuppence to spend* (2003) and *Under the apple tree* (2004), which also concerns the activities of the WVS in Portsmouth during World War II, and the observers who spent their time on the roof of the Royal Beach Hotel spotting enemy aircraft.

James Riordan is another example of a person who became an author as a second career (in his case, after being lecturer *in* and later professor *of* Russian Studies). Born in 1936, he grew up during the war in his chimney-sweep grandfather's house in Manor Park Avenue, Copnor. After attendance at Portsmouth Grammar School he was variously a barman, waiter, railway clerk, commercial salesman, and dance band musician before settling into an academic career. Since retiring from that, he has written several successful children's books for Oxford University Press, both fiction and non-fiction, football featuring strongly in the latter.[54]

James's first novel *Sweet clarinet* (1998) won the National Association for Special Educational Needs Award and was shortlisted for the 1998 Whitbread Children's Book Award. It is based on a real-life experience when his mother and he were

James Riordan, a publicity photo for Sweet Clarinet, *1998.*
(Courtesy of James Riordan)

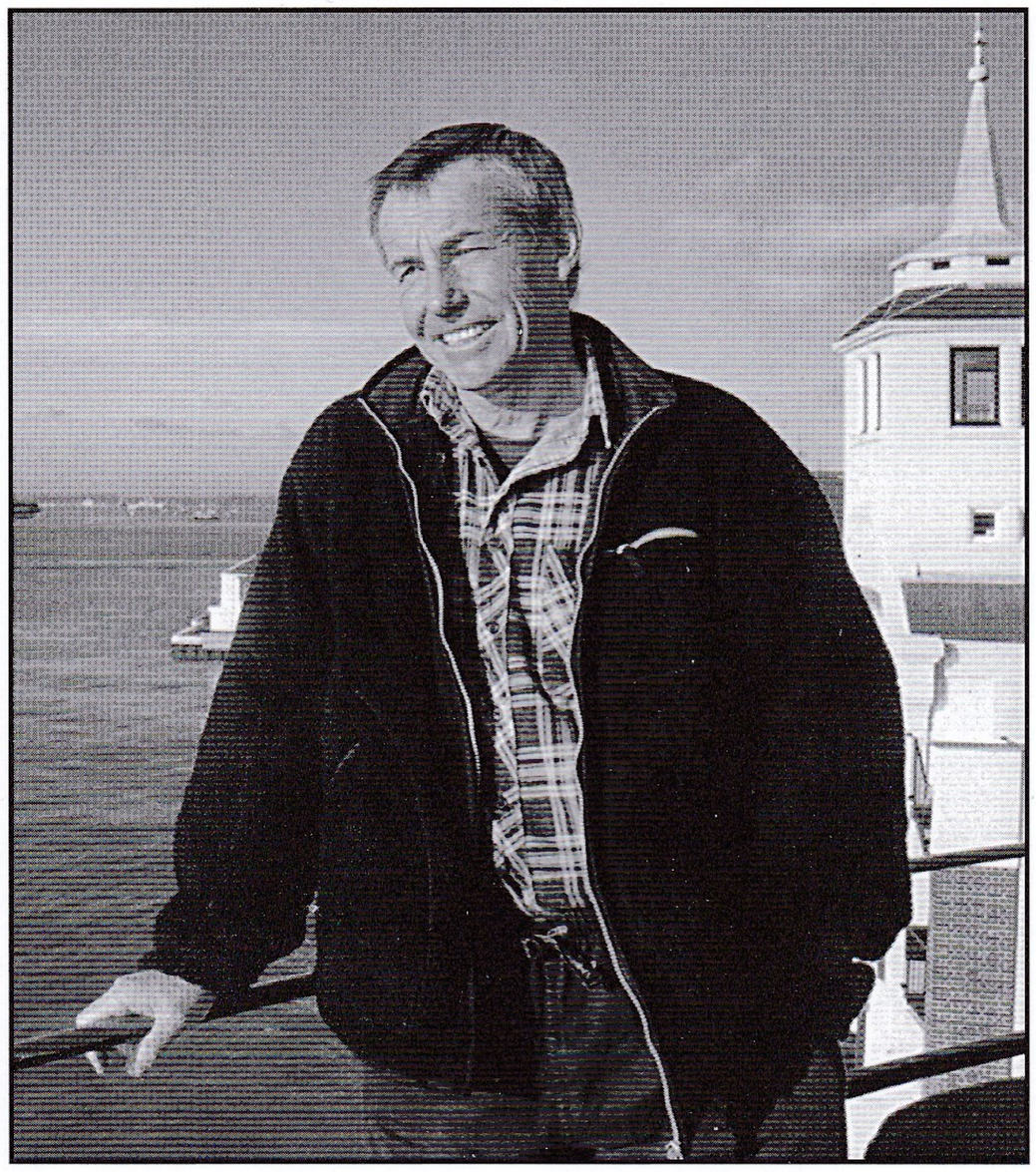


caught in an air-raid shelter in St George's Square. *The prisoner* (1999) is about a German pilot who bails out over the woods at Hilsea, *The guns fall silent* (2000) is about two youth players from Portsmouth FC who go off to the trenches, *War song* (2001) concerns the author's two Portsmouth-born aunts who serve out World War I in St Mary's Hospital and the Dockyard, and *The cello* (2003) is about a gay boy growing up in Paulsgrove during the anti-paedophile riots in 2000.

Mention must also be made of **Julia Bryant**. She was born in Portsmouth in 1939 and attended Meon Road Secondary Modern School. After a career as a nurse and mother and a degree from La Sainte Union College, Southampton, she took up authorship and has so far produced five novels set in Portsea about women "living their lives between the tides of men at home and men at sea".[55] All are published from London by Hodder and Stoughton. The saga begins in 1916 with *Waiting for the tide* (1999), and continues annually with *Written on the tide*, *Borne on the tide*, *The restless tide* and *The spirit of Nelson Street*. Ms Bryant is known to take great pains to ensure historical accuracy.

Moving to our subjects of the 1940s, **Graham Hurley** was born in Clacton in 1946. He began his career producing documentaries for Southern Television, which brought him to this area. He lived for a time in Wickham, but missing the sea, settled in Southsea in 1977. Graham Hurley has written various works of non-fiction, drama, a regular column in the Portsmouth *News,* the script for Portsmouth's Millennium

Graham Hurley on the Round Tower, about 1999.
(Courtesy of Graham Hurley)

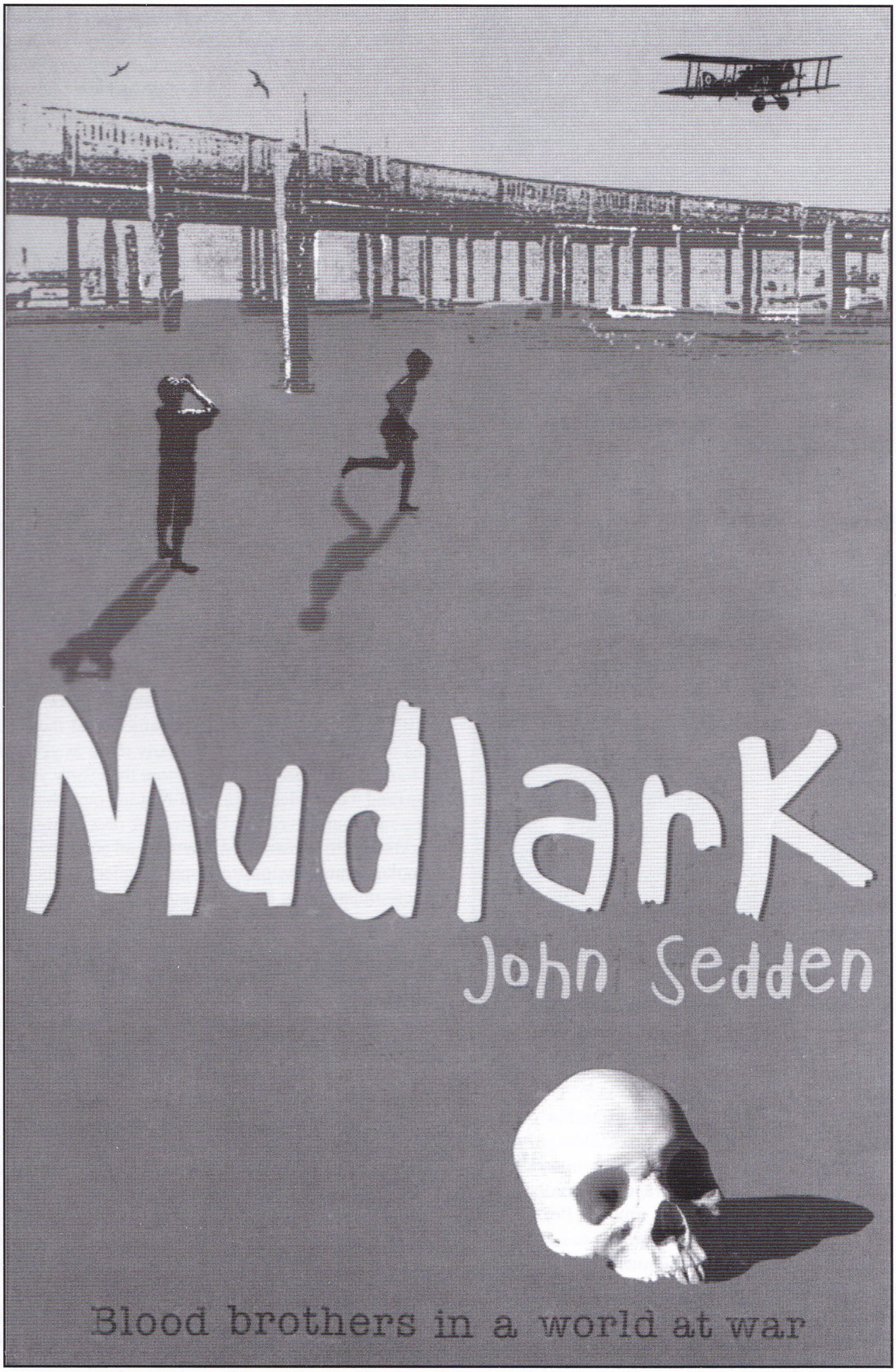


Pageant, and some ten novels, including a crime thriller series set in Portsmouth featuring DI Joe Faraday, all published from London by Orion, (*Turnstone*, 2000, *The take*, 2001, *Angels passing*, 2002, and *Deadlight*, 2003), and two political novels, *Rules of engagement* (London: Macmillan, 1990), adapted from a six-part television drama, portraying Portsmouth on the eve of World War III when a state of emergency results in the city being sealed off, and *Heaven's light* (same publisher, 1997), in which the city of Portsmouth tries to declare UDI.[56]

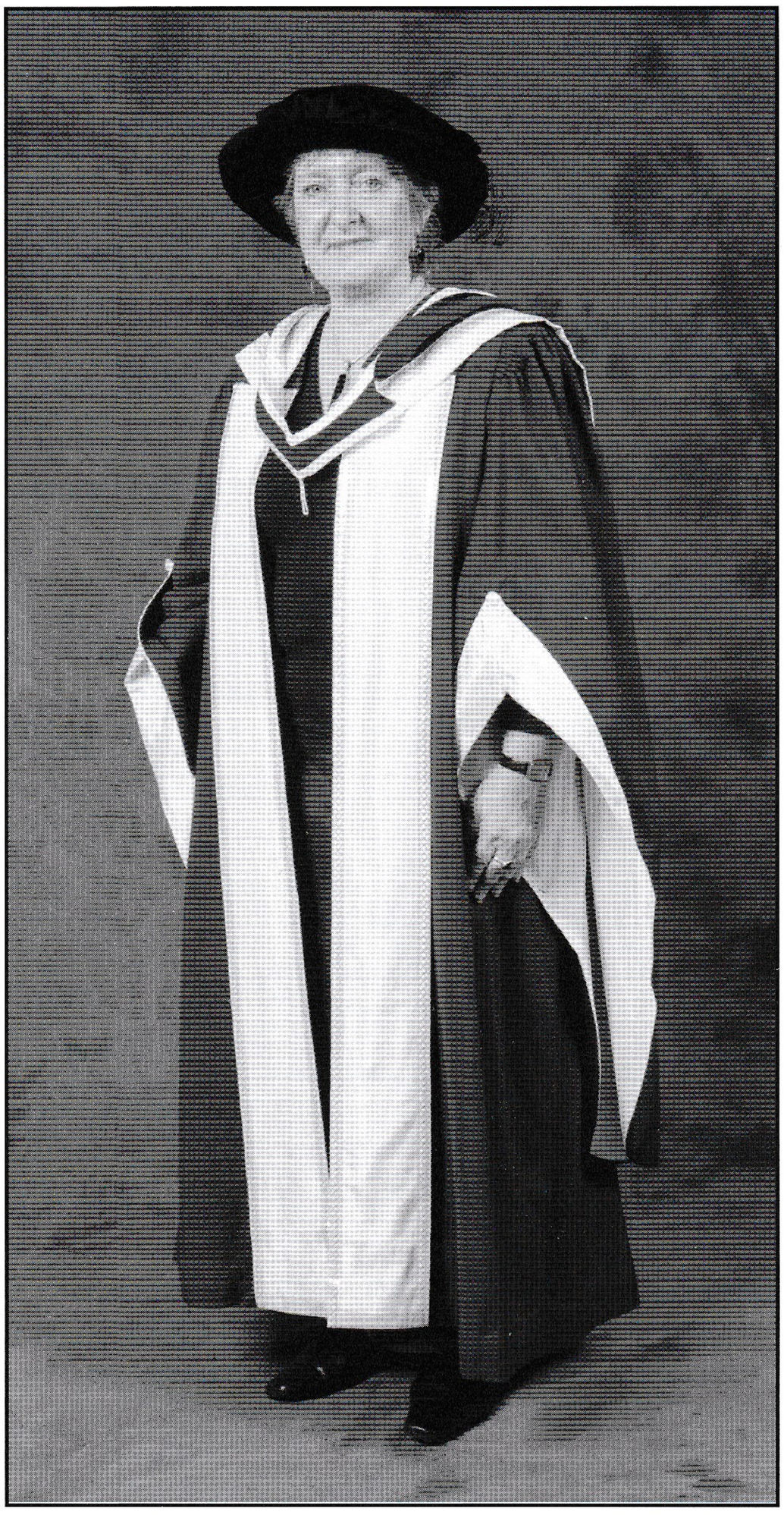
Diana Winsor was born in Belfast in 1946, and went to school in Hong Kong, Bath and Dunfermline. Her father was a Ministry of Defence official who became Naval Armament Superintendent at Priddy's Hard and founded the museum now known as *Explosion!* Ms Winsor lived with her parents in Portsmouth when her first novel *Red on Wight* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972) was published. It is a cold-war thriller set mostly in Portsmouth. A newspaper report at the time spoke of her "having picked up stuff at naval cocktail parties", and the Ministry of Defence called the book in to have it vetted by naval intelligence.[57] Her second novel *The death convention* (same publisher, 1974), features the same heroine. Ms Winsor also has short stories and travel/local history books to her credit. Her latest work, *Mr Brouard's odyssey* was published in 2004 by the Polperro Heritage press at Clifton-upon-Teme.

Finally, four more Portsmouth births: **Michelle Magorian** was born in Southsea in November 1947.[58] She lived abroad for a time, but spent her teenage years here (in 1963 she lived in Victoria Road North).[59] Haunting the King's Theatre was a favourite occupation. Initially a mime artiste and actress, she has become a highly-acclaimed children's author in the last

The cover of John Sedden's Mudlark.
(*Mudlark* © John Sedden 2005, reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd)



Michelle Magorian (pictured here) and Betty Burton were awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Portsmouth in 2005 and 2002 respectively.
(Courtesy of the University of Portsmouth, photographer Kevin Purdy)



twenty years or so. Her first novel, *Goodnight, Mr Tom* (Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books, 1981), has achieved particularly great success.

John Sedden, (*aka* Sadden) a successful author of local history books, published his first novel in 2005. *Mudlark* (London: Puffin) is the story of two boys at the time of World War I eking out their mothers' paltry wages by mudlarking - scavenging for coins thrown into the mud of Portsmouth harbour. John was born in Portsmouth in 1958, went to the Southern Grammar School and has had many jobs in the city, including postman, factory labourer, cardboard box maker, gardener and Social Security clerk. He took a degree as a mature student at what was then the Polytechnic. At the time of writing, he was resident in Gosport.[60]

Our next subject, **Alison Habens** was born in Portsmouth in 1967. She attended Springfield School in Drayton. At the time of preparing this paper she was teaching creative writing at the University.[61] She has to date had three novels published, the most recent of which, *Lifestory* (London: Allison and Busby, 2003), is partly set in a recognisable Portsmouth and Southsea, with real places featuring, for example, the war memorial on Southsea Common, the Queen's Hotel, Lumps Fort, and the number 23 bus service running from North End to Southsea.

Karen Traviss is the latest Portsmouth-born author to achieve success, this time in the field of science fiction. She was born in Wymering. After attending the Northern Grammar School, she worked as a journalist before joining Portsmouth City Council as media and communications manager. Her *City of pearl* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004) had a sequel *Crossing the line* later the same year and a third in the series was due in November 2005. Ms Traviss also contributes to the *Star wars* saga.[62]

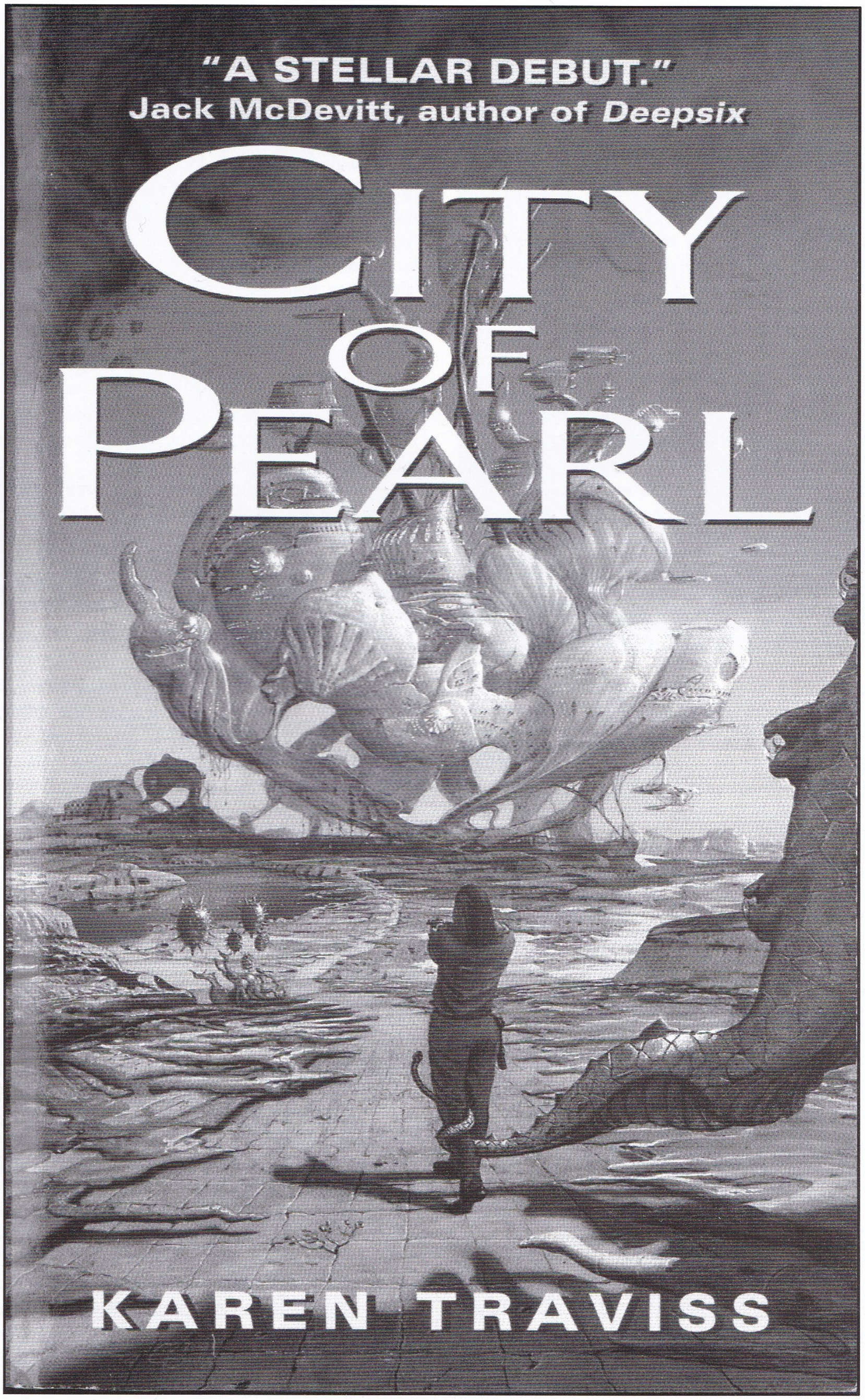
Two authors who may warrant fuller treatment in any subsequent edition of this paper are **Brooke Biaz** (a *nom-de-plume*), and **Sam North**, a published novelist, both of whom had recently joined the staff of the university. Sam's latest work, *The curse of the Niebelung …* (Morrisville: Lulu Press) was due out at about the same time as this paper – and one of Sam's students was about to have a novel published – and so it goes on.

There are a number of other novels with Portsmouth as a significant setting but where the author's connection (if any) with the city is yet to be ascertained, and these are listed in the appendix. There must be many more as yet undiscovered. I have a clear recollection of more than forty years ago taking up (and then replacing) a lurid-looking paperback thriller from the rack outside South Parade Pier describing a car chase in Portsmouth – down the Eastern Road and through Milton – a book presumably lost until some reader of this recalls it – and there must surely be many more 'out there somewhere'.

Many works of fiction dealing with naval topics presumably at least mention Portsmouth, and there was a whole flurry of novels written between about 1887 and 1910 polemicising against the country's apparent lack of preparation for a naval war and predicting dire consequences, most of which include descriptions of attacks on the Portsmouth area in the near future.[63]

What conclusions can be drawn from all this? The father who was in the navy, army or dockyard must be attributed *some* significance. Rowson, Dickens, Clavell, Kent and Winsor were here by accident of their father's posting, and Westerman, Manning, Granger and Horniman were born to naval fathers who were perhaps more permanently settled here. And indirectly, it could be argued that Kipling and Hutchinson were here because Southsea had that special talent for providing lodgings for children or families whose fathers were away. The ships of the navy would also account for Fred Jane's presence.

Karen Traviss wrote this novel in her spare time while working for Portsmouth City Council.
(*City of pearl* © Karen Traviss 2004, reproduced by permission of EOS Books/ HarperCollins Publishers Inc.)



Three of our 19th-century novelists were born to businessmen, Meredith to a shopkeeper, Besant to a merchant, and Doudney to a factory owner. This may suggest, however tentatively, that parents of this class were keen to provide some liberal education for their offspring. The fact that Meredith and Besant went to the same school a few years apart may serve as a springboard for some future research into that establishment and its personnel.

Very, very tentatively – is there anything to be said for the suggestion that young persons with some degree of sensitivity or intellect might be led into, again very tentatively, the introspective activity of authorship as a reaction to the relatively unsympathetic environment of a dockyard town or the unsettled nature of the pillar-to-post existence of a serviceman's child?

Thinking back to schools, we note that five of our subjects went to Portsmouth Grammar School. Several more were privately educated, but about an equal number went to what would now be called state schools. To avoid controversy, readers are left to form whatever conclusions they like about this. But the fact that eight out of the eleven lady authors discussed are currently alive suggests strongly that educational opportunities for women have improved rapidly in recent generations. By corollary, it can be argued that the social acceptance of women writing is now long established. Having said that, we must reflect that the earliest of all the authors we discuss was a woman who was for a time the family breadwinner.

So far, of all the authors discussed, only one has died here. Of our twelve (excluding Messrs Biaz and North) living authors, four reside here, two of those having been born here, two more living here by choice. Of the eighteen authors who are now dead, only four, Doudney, Doyle, Jane and Westerman published anything of significance while they lived here. This suggests that other places, especially London, provided a better environment for the pursuit of a literary career. Have better communications, including the internet, now provided so much flexibility that place of residence can be decided by choice rather than necessity? (None of our living authors are London-based.) Has Portsmouth really become a more pleasant place in which to live and work in the last fifty years or so? Are family or social relationships easier now, so as to preclude the necessity to get away as soon as possible that some of our earlier subjects felt? Is the whole social milieu now more conducive to authorship?

While it is to be hoped that the information presented in this paper is entertaining and interesting in itself, perhaps it will also provoke some reflection by statisticians, sociologists, demographers, historians and most importantly the enthusiastic amateur on the nature of our city, its opportunities and constraints.

STOP PRESS

Thanks to the sophisticated searching facilities of the on-line *Dictionary of national biography*, three more Portsmouth-born novelists came to light as this publication was in press:

Celia Levetus (*née* Moss), c1819-1873, was the fourth of twelve children of Joseph and Amelia Moss, a family prominent in Portsmouth Jewry. She and her sister **Marion** had enjoyed writing fairy stories in their youth. Their father disapproved of this activity, but when illness prevented him from supporting the family, they began publishing to supplement their finances. A collection of stories, *The romance of Jewish history* appeared in 1840 with a London imprint, and a second edition in 1843. *Tales of Jewish history* was published the same year. These are believed to be among the first works of fiction ever published by Jewish women, and thus have important gender *and* religious implications. By 1845, Celia and Marion were running a boarding school in London with Marion's husband Alponse Hartog. Celia married one Edward Hyman Levetus in 1847, and the couple moved to Birmingham. She continued writing from time to time and, despite their new place of residence, her *The king's physician and other tales* was published by T. Hinton of Portsea in 1865.

Michael Galchinsky, 'Levetus, Celia (*c.*1819–1873)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, [accessed 4 Jan 2006: http:www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/59417]

Charlotte Cameron (*née* Wales-Almy) was born in Portsmouth in 1872 or '73, the daughter of a captain in the Royal Navy. Nothing seems to be known of her early life, except that she was married to a Major Donald Cameron who had died by 1901. Although she married again, she never used her second husband's surname. She was elected to fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society in 1913, and is best known as a prolific travel writer – indeed, her obituary in *The Times* for 11 December 1946 describes her as a "woman explorer". However, a handful of novels, including *A passion in Morocco* and *A durbar bride*, published in London by Stanley Paul and Co. in 1911 and 1912 respectively, entitles her to a mention in these pages.

Avril M. C. Maddrell, 'Cameron, Charlotte (1872/3–1946)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, [accessed 4 Jan 2005: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62112]

APPENDIX

We have looked at authors who were born in Portsmouth, or who spent some part of their life here, and where applicable we have drawn attention to their use of this locale. Many other authors have set works wholly or partly in the town/city, and a very provisional list of those set wholly or mostly in Portsmouth follows in chronological order below. Space constraints preclude a number of other titles where only a relatively minor part of the action is set here, for example, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Captain Marryat's *Peter Simple* (1834) which has a lively and valuable description of the fair on Portsdown Hill, and the intriguingly entitled *Penelope goes to Portsmouth*, by Marion Chesney (published in 1991 but set in Regency times).

Any connection with Portsmouth that the authors of the following Portsmouth-located novels have is yet to be established. Some, at least, may well have been entitled to discussion in the pages above. They are listed by date of publication.

Howard, Edward G.G., *Jack ashore* (London: Henry Colburn, 1840). First editions were published anonymously; a moralising tale set largely around Portsmouth and Portchester. Mainly dialogue, with a few splashes of local description and comment.

Phipson, T.L., *On Southsea parade, a romance of 1889* (London: Patching and Co., 1890). A novel telling how a gentleman discovered his long-lost daughter while on holiday in a recognisable Southsea.

Jeffery, Walter, *The King's yard: a story of old Portsmouth* (London: R.A. Everett and Co. Ltd., 1903). A fictionalised account of the John the Painter episode, rich in local detail and atmosphere.

Byerley, L.W., *In merry Portsmouth town. A story of the days of Lord Anson* (London: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1905). A sentimental tale against a background of religious orthodoxy versus dissent, with local detail throughout.

Crouch, Arthur Philip, *Nellie of the 'Eight Bells'* (London: John Long, 1908). A romance set in Portsmouth around the time of Trafalgar. The 'Eight Bells' is a Portsmouth inn, but the book contains little description. (There *was* a pub called the Eight Bells in St Mary Street which in 1854 attracted complaints to the Watch Committee about prostitution there.)

Brady, Cyrus Townsend, *The adventures of Lady Susan* (London: Greening and Co. Ltd., 1909). Set in the 18th century, a good deal of the action involves various characters arriving at or escaping from Portsmouth, but with little significant description.

Divine, David, *Atom at Spithead* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1953). A cold-war thriller about an atom bomb set to go off during the coronation fleet review.

Murrell, Shirley, *Fortune of the ships* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955). Set largely in Portsmouth in the second half of the 18th century, features historical events such as the court-martial of Admiral Byng and the sinking of the *Royal George*.

Golding, Louis, *The little old admiral* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1958). A novel about the friendship between a tramp with naval connections and a boy who joined the navy when he grew up, mostly set in a part-recognisable, part-fictitious Portsmouth soon after World War II.

O'Donoughue, William, *Cat aboard the Victory* (London: William Kimber, 1969). The contemporary adventures of a cat born in a pub just outside the Unicorn Gate of Portsmouth dockyard, where most of the action takes place, although some of it is aboard the ship herself.

Wheeler, Terence, *The wreck of the Rat Trap* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1973). The 'Rat Trap' is the alias of a pub called the Raglan Arms, in a dockyard town where one finds the "house where Charles Dickens saw the light in 1812", and the action takes place during World War II.

Hebden, Mark, *A pride of dolphins* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974). A thriller involving the theft of a submarine. Much of the action takes place in Portsmouth and the surrounding area; some local detail, sometimes authentic, sometimes fanciful.

Vignoles, Keith H., *Portsmouth Point: a sea story of 1814* (Havant: the Pallant Press, 1984). A fast-moving adventure story that includes some historical incidents and personalities, giving an accurate, if somewhat rose-tinted evocation of Portsmouth at the time.

Creighton, Christopher, and Hynd, Noel, *The Khruschev objective* (New York: Doubleday, 1987). A fictionalised version of the disappearance of Commander Crabbe, the diver, during a Russian naval visit to Portsmouth in 1956.

Meades, Jonathan, *Pompey* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993). A surrealistic novel, where, according to the blurb on the dust-jacket, "the dominant setting is the titular city – a nightmarish brick grid set on mud and populated by garish freaks".

Beale, Patricia, *Queen of the May* (London: Mandarin, 1995). A novel about a girl from the Portsmouth back-streets, set in the 1930s and 1940s, in which the locale is significant throughout.

NOTES

[1] Newspaper announcements were appearing. For example, in the *Hampshire Chronicle* for 31 December 1827, there is a notice that the young gentlemen of the Classical and Mathematical Academy conducted by Mr Neave in Union Street, Portsea, would resume their studies on 14 January 1828.

[2] J. Webb *et al.* (eds), *The spirit of Portsmouth* (1989), p.95

[3] 'The geographical distribution of British intellect', *Nineteenth Century*, 24 (1888), pp.184-195

[4] Patricia L. Parker, *Susanna Rowson* (1986), p.1

[5] Ellen Brandt, *Susanna Haswell Rowson, America's first best-selling novelist* (1975), p.2

[6] Ibid., p.60

[7] Michael Allen, *Charles Dickens' childhood* (1988), p.13

[8] Ibid., p.1

[9] Ibid., p.20

[10] Ibid., p.24

[11] H. Sargeant, *A history of Portsmouth theatres*, Portsmouth Paper 13 (1971), p.13

[12] George Dolby, *Charles Dickens as I knew him* (1912), pp.37-8

[13] Allen, *op. cit*, pp.26-7

[14] Information provided by Professor Tony Pointon, an eminent Dickensian, which he had digested from various biographies, eg, Michael Slater, *Dickens and women* (1985), and http://www.visitportsmouth.co.uk/history/118.htm

[15] Claire Tomalin, *The invisible woman* (Viking, 1990), is recommended reading for Dickens's relationship with Ellen Ternan.

[16] Margaret Harris, 'Meredith, George (1828-1909)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography,* 2004 [accessed 2 Dec 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34991]

[17] Simon Eliot, 'Besant, Sir Walter (1836-1901)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 2004 [accessed 2 Dec 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30736]

[18] Reproduced in a 'new' (1885) edition of the novel.

[19] Charlotte Mitchell, 'Doudney, Sarah (1841-1926)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 2004 [accessed 29 Nov 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55573]

[20] Photocopies in Portsmouth Central Library

[21] Unfortunately, the British Library's copy was destroyed in the blitz. There are reference copies in the National Library of Scotland and Liverpool University Library, which the author was unable to visit.

[22] *Something of myself* (1937)

[23] E.g. Kingsley Amis, *Rudyard Kipling and his world* (1975) p.18. In his reminiscences *The moon's a balloon* (1971) the film actor David Niven, 1910-1983, recounts a similar unhappy experience in a similar establishment in Southsea a couple of generations later. Its location is not known for certain, but a local tradition has it that it was next door to Lorne Lodge.

[24] Various sources, for example the Internet Movie Database, give 1872 as his date of birth. Portsmouth Grammar School records confirm the deductions made by Gil Skidmore, the Research Collections Co-ordinator at the Library of the University of Reading (where some Horniman material is located), that 1868 is correct.

[25] Much of this material derives from the following article: Jerome Betts,'Portsmouth's Percy F. Westerman – 50 years a writer', *Hampshire: the County Magazine,* 24(2), December 1983, pp.52-4, and from personal discussion with Mr Nigel Gossop.

[26] *Pink's Pictorial*, 1(7), Xmas 1908, p.11. There is a copy in the Portsmouth Central Library.

[27] Section 1 of chapter four in his *Experiment in autobiography* (1934), is entitled 'Fourth start in life – Southsea (1881-83)'.

[28] *Experiment in autobiography*, chapter four. Wells always uses "Hyde"; directories of the period are consistent in their spelling "Hide". Staff at Portsmouth City Records Office have confirmed this spelling.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Alice Payne Hackett and James Henry Burke, *80 years of bestsellers* (1977)

[31] *Bring back the days* (1958)

[32] My thanks to the archivist of Portsmouth Grammar School for this information.

[33] Geoffrey Stavert, *A study in Southsea: the unrevealed life of Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle* (1987), is the source of much of the information that follows. At the time of writing, Portsmouth Museums and Records Service had recently acquired the Richard Lancelyn Green collection of Conan Doyle material. This was still largely inaccessible, but when it is available it will form the most valuable single collection for the study of this author.

[34] One of 88 poems gathered into *The poems of Arthur Conan Doyle* (1922) is entitled 'A reminiscence of cricket'.

[35] A long-hop is a very short ball that should be easy to hit.

[36] Minutes of the society, preserved in Portsmouth Central Library; Hesketh Pearson, *Conan Doyle* (1943), chapter 7; Portsmouth City Records Office, 2229A.

[37] *Stevens' directory of Portsmouth, Portsea, Southsea, Landport and Gosport* (1890)

[38] *My life and times, Octave 1* (1963), p.118

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., p.225

[41] *My life and times, Octave 2* (1963), p.65

[42] Max Saunders, 'Aldington, Edward Godfree (1892-1962), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 2004 [accessed 6 Dec 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30366]; Charles Doyle, *Richard Aldington: a biography* (1989)

[43] *Life for life's sake* (1941)

[44] Richard Brooks, *Fred T. Jane: an eccentric visionary* (1997), has been used extensively for material on this author.

[45] Robert Hogan (ed), *Dictionary of Irish literature* (1979), p.270

[46] Ibid.

[47] Neville Braybrooke and June Braybooke in their *Olivia Manning: a life* (2004), say that she was coy about her schooling. On p.19 they confirm a letter a correspondent sent to me in reply to a printed query in *The News* that she attended Lynton House School in Kingston Crescent, but subsequently repeat the error that she went to Portsmouth Grammar School. The archivist at Portsmouth Grammar School confirms that she didn't go there, and the appropriate member of staff at the girls' Portsmouth High School also confirmed that she didn't go there either.

[48] *Oxford dictionary of national biography 2004* [accessed 2 Dec 2004: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35261]; Nevil Shute, *Slide rule* (London: Readers Union 1956) *passim*, especially pp.237-8

[49] The Ultimate [unofficial] James Clavell Website http://www.jamesclavell.net/, accessed 6 Dec 2004, says he was born in 1924, Halliwell's *Filmgoer's companion* says 1922; the archivist at Portsmouth Grammar School confirms the date of birth in the school's records as 1921.

[50] Personal communication from Mr Kent – but he couldn't remember the club's name. My thanks are due to Mr Kent himself for providing most of the information that has gone into this piece about him. He has also drawn my attention to **Anthony Firth**, an apparently Portsmouth-based author who wrote one novel, *Tall, balding, thirty-five* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), his only work recorded in the British Library catalogue. An internet search for him has revealed only one other possibility for his activities – as a producer for a couple of BBC comedy programmes in 1964 and 1965. No further information has yet come to light.

[51] Personal communication from Ms Granger

[52] Personal communication from Ms Burton and her website http://www.bettyburton.co.uk/. One of the project's outcomes was Sharon Lee & John Stedman (eds), *Fingers to the bone: recollections of corset workers in Portsmouth* (Portsmouth Museums & Records Service, 2002).

[53] Personal communication from Ms Harry and her pages on the Orion Publishing Group website http://www.orionbooks.co.uk/5113-1/Author-Lilian-Harry.htm

[54] Personal acquaintance and his pages on the OUP website http://www.oup.co.uk/oxed/children/authors/riordan/

[55] Personal acquaintance and her website http://www.juliabryant-online.com/

[56] Personal communication from Mr Hurley and his website http://www.grahamhurley.co.uk/

[57] Personal communication from Ms Winsor

[58] Personal communication from Ms Magorian. Some sources say 1948.

[59] Kate Agnew & M. Magorian, *An interview with Michelle Magorian* (Mammoth, 1999)

[60] Personal acquaintance

[61] Personal acquaintance

[62] Personal communication and her website http://www.karentraviss.com/

[63] R.C. Anderson, 'Naval warfare in fiction', *Mariner's Mirror*, 51 (3), August 1965, pp.243-52, discusses many of these.

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